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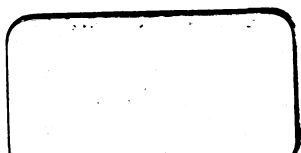
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A VERY WOMAN
M.F. O'MALL



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A VERY WOMAN.

VOL. III.

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A VERY WOMAN.

BY

M. F. O'MALLEY.

" Like to the clear, sweet spring of dawning day,
Like to the fresh'ning breath of opening May,
Like the glad lark sprung from the glittering dew,
An Angel! yet a very woman too!"

VOL. III.



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A VERY WOMAN.



CHAPTER I.

"For I dipt into the future far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be ;
When the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law."

TENNYSON.

It was about eight o'clock when Harry arrived in Paris, and drove through the gay, lighted streets to his brother's apartments in the Rue Scribe.

"M'sieu Vane? Oui M'sieu, au troisième,

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M'sieu," said the *concierge*, when at last Rue Scribe was reached. So to the *troisième* Harry mounted, rang at the door bell, was admitted by an irreproachable servant, and shown into a pretty little *salon*, while the domestic went to announce his arrival.

In the next room Harry could hear laughing, talking, jingling of glasses. "Vivian evidently has a dinner-party," he thought; meanwhile, he gazed round the room he was in. The groundwork of the furniture was of the usual Parisian *appartement garnie* type—gilding, mirrors, red velvet chairs, marble-topped tables, and clocks; Vivian had added a large oak writing-table, covered with papers, a quantity of books, some neatly arranged on

book shelves, others piled on tables, chairs, and even the floor, a water-colour drawing of St Michael's Court, two or three good engravings, and a beautiful statue of Psyche. This statue was the principal feature in the room. It was placed on a pedestal with a violet silk curtain behind it; hanging over it was a swinging lamp with a shade that threw all the light down on the marble figure, and before it was a vase of hothouse flowers, as though they were offered at the shrine of the goddess. Harry looked at it, and listened to the sounds from the next room. There was a great deal of noise as if several people were talking at once, then, above the clamour rose Vivian's voice, "*A la République universelle!*" then there was a shout and a

clinking of glasses, and then, evidently, the servant had announced his arrival, for there was a sudden cessation of the noise, and, in a minute, the door opened, and Vivian came in.

“How are you, old man?” he said, as the brothers shook hands heartily, “I am *very* glad to see you. I didn’t expect you till to-morrow though, so I am sorry to say we have finished dinner. However, some will be ready in a minute; I suppose you haven’t had any?”

“Devil a bit!” said Harry, “and I’m as hungry as a hunter; but look here, old fellow! don’t let me put you out; anything will do for me.”

“Put me out! what are you talking about? I’m only sorry I didn’t know you

were coming that we might have waited. I have some men dining with me now. What would you like to do? Would you like me to send them away—I can, if you like—and go to a *restaurant* to dine? or will you have some dinner here?”

“I will have something here,” was the answer; “anything will do, mind; don’t send your friends away, it would be an awful shame—besides, I should like to see them; who are they? I heard you proposing a fearfully republican toast just now.”

“Yes,” said Vivian, laughing, “my friends are not among the orthodox of the earth. I am afraid you will be scandalised with the sentiments we all give vent to; but

come along, and let me introduce them to you. There is Henri Musard, the poet; Gerard, a doctor, and a great friend of mine; a young artist, Paul de Kernadec,—by the way, you've met him before, haven't you? and the other two are *littérateurs*."

Captain Vane accordingly followed his brother into the dining-room, where sat five men in velvet coats and other fancy costumes, not a dress suit among them. Vivian rapidly made the introductions, talking meanwhile so lightly and gaily, that the stranger element, as Harry felt himself to be, soon harmonised with the rest of the company.

There was a little conversation on general topics, in which Harry, who talked French

with sufficient fluency, joined, and then his dinner appeared on the scene, and while he was eating, the talk drifted back to the subject it had been on before his arrival,—namely, political ideals.

“*Pour moi je dis*,” said Musard, “that thy *République universelle* is a dream, Vane,—a wild dream!”

“A dream for which thou wouldst die, then, Musard,” answered Vivian. “I know thee! A dream for which we would all die, *par Dieu!* A golden dream of the far future,—which *we* shall never live to see, but which we will all work for, hope for, live for! Harry,” he said, turning to his brother, “how far off do you think is the ‘Parliament of man—the federation of the world?’”

"So far off that it will never come, I think," said Harry; "so long as men are men, there must be nationalities and conflicting interests."

"What I say too," said Musard. "It will be the golden age the poets feigned, only they placed it in the past, and we in the future; when France and Prussia love each other,—the lion and the lamb living together in amity, or rather the eagle and the obscene vulture, I should say."

There was a loud outcry and a laugh.

"The eagle, Musard?" said a man with long hair and wildly flowing beard; "bah! thou art nothing but an Imperialist at heart!"

"*I* Imperialist? *I*, who look for a *République Française, une et indivisible?*

—such a republic as the giants of '93 dreamed of?"

"The giants of '93?" thought Harry, "is it like that he speaks of the demons of the Revolution? Do you really mean," he asked, "that you wish for a return of the first French Republic,—years of cruelty, blood, and horror?"

Musard shrugged his shoulders. "A stern revenge for the crimes of the past," he said; "a blood-letting for a fevered patient."

Harry looked rather shocked.

"Blood-letting is out of fashion in medicine now, Musard, as Gerard there will tell you," said Vivian, with a laugh; "and what do you say to the September massacres, to the murder of the Girondins,

to the Nantes *noyades*, and other little things of the same kind? No, no; we must not deny that, in spite of the glorious work it did for the world, the First Republic ran riot at the last in madness and horror. We must make our excuse for it on the very ground of that madness, and of the danger outside. The coalition of nations was hemming France round; she fought with a glorious courage, born too of the Revolution fever; but the fearful peril of her position made her mad with suspicion of internal enemies, and caused the atrocities of the Reign of Terror."

"*La, la, la!*" said Musard impatiently, "crimes! horrors! murders! atrocities! what words are these? Thou art but the lover of a rose-water liberty, Vivian! The

people had been ground down ; they demanded a stern, a terrible, a *just* revenge ! Yes, and what is more, they will demand it again ; the oppressed will again turn and rend the oppressors. Perish all tyrants, say I ; perish all who would enslave my France ! Crush, exterminate them, O Virgin Republic, with thine advancing car ! The Tree of Liberty must be watered, if necessary, by blood and tears even. Terrible throes must be suffered before the fair child, Freedom, be born ! ”

“ So be it ! ” said Vivian ; “ there must be birth-pangs, I grant you, before the man-child see the light of day, but do not you rough surgeons hasten the work, or, perhaps, you may find the babe still-born on your hands. Be patient, be patient, be patient. In

Nature nothing is hurried. It takes many winters' rain, many spring tides' sunshine, before the acorn grows into the giant oak."

"Be patient? *Tonnerre de Dieu!*" said the Frenchman, his eyes flaming; "till when must one be patient? *d'is donc!* Are we to wear our chains till the rust cuts them through? No! rather let us rise and break them with one struggle."

"Why not find the key and unlock them," said Vivian, "instead of, with agony, and conflict, and turmoil, striving to *break* what has over and over again proved too strongly forged? You, Henri, yes, all here, know what I long for, what we all long for—a republic of humanity—light, freedom, peace for all mankind. It is a far-off dream, but at

least we can work for it with our tongues, our pens, our lives, if need be with our blood, but at least let us not begin by strife, fire, extermination."

"Thou talkest of *humanity*," said Musard, "and I of *France*. *D'abord la patrie, et puis les pays*. The Republic of France, the free Commune of France, that is what I work for, Vivian, after that thy dream for the world!"

He was violently excited, and Vivian, not wishing the discussion to become too warm, deftly turned the conversation into a somewhat different channel.

"You call me a dreamer, Henri! Do not you see already the first faint flush in the eastern sky, that heralds the dawn I hope for? Science slowly growing from point to

point; Truth beginning to loosen her swathing bands; the nations gradually breaking their bondage; the serf free in Russia, the slave in America, Italy united, and Hungary free?"

Then one voice after another arose, eyes flashed, hands moved in gesticulation. Harry was half deafened by the clamour, and all that he heard astonished him greatly, to use no stronger term! The tyranny of Creed, the tyranny of Marriage, the tyranny of Capital, all were declaimed against.

"And these are Vivian's friends!" thought Harry; "well, I must say they are a nice lot!"

At last Prévost got up, saying he had to go to his work at the office of the journal he wrote for, and all the others

rose at the same time. There was a little light laughter and jesting, then all said "Good-night," and the brothers were left alone.

"Will you come and take a turn while you finish your smoke, Harry?" said Vivian; "this room is so hot, a breath of fresh air would be pleasant."

"All right! delighted!" was the answer; so they went out on to the lighted Boulevards.

"Vivian," asked Harry, "do you really believe in all that wild nonsense those fellows talked? What an extraordinary set you have got into! What would they think at St Michael's if they could hear you!"

"What, indeed?" said Vivian, laughing;

"can you imagine my father's face if he had dropped in among us? I think he would have had a fit!"

"Well, I never heard such rank socialism talked in all my life!" said Harry; "and precious bloodthirsty that fellow Musard seems to be!"

"Pshaw, the kindest-hearted fellow in the world; he wouldn't hurt a fly really," said Vivian; "it's only talk."

"No; but, Vivian, are these *really* your opinions? Do you *really* believe all this infernal stuff? Good God! do you mean to say that you want to upset society, and pull down all class distinctions, and make all men equal?"

"I don't want to pull down anything," said Vivian, "at least not to pull down

22 with bloodshed and violence. All must be done slowly, quietly, by the common-sense of men. But if you ask me what I hope for, wish for in the future, it is that all adventitious distinctions may perish. Differences there must be between man and man, but let the difference be of God's making, not man's. Let us have *la carrière ouverte aux talents*; let *all* have light, air, food, both for body and mind; let *all* have a chance, not only a few. I hope for a day when there will be one republic of humanity, where, by common consent, the wisest will govern, when men shall live together as brothers, not crushing each other, tearing at each other's throats."

"You are a poet," said Harry, "and
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therefore have some right to be a dreamer, but a dreamer you are! How far off do you think your fine republic?"

"How can I tell!" was the answer; "I know *I* shall never live to see it, but none the less I will give my life to bringing it nearer. Some old Jew said once in the Rabbinical writings, 'Work, work, thou art not called on to finish the work, but do thy part.' That is my notion."

"And what is to become of the struggle for existence I have heard you yourself talk about? and if you have no more wars, and preserve life in every way, how long will it be before the earth is too small to hold us?"

"A long, long time," said Vivian. "Take the earth as it is now, why, we men use

and cultivate but a very small part of it; there are still vast regions where the human race can spread. Then for the part that is cultivated, even most highly cultivated, but very little is produced, compared to what the soil is capable of bearing. Some day, I hope, men will see the folly of sending to the sea all the valuable refuse which now poisons our rivers, and which might fertilise our fields; some day, I hope, they will learn the crime of waste, and then, the desert shall blossom like the rose, and the kindly earth bear fruit a thousand-fold!"

"Poet," said Harry, affectionately putting his hand on his brother's shoulder; "and you *really* hope for all this, Vivian?"

"If I didn't, should I have the courage

to live?" was the answer in a low, sad tone. "It is all I care for—present company always excepted, of course, old boy," he added in a more cheerful tone.

Harry puffed thoughtfully at his cigar. If he had been a Frenchman he would have said something sentimental, being a Briton he held his peace.

"How are they all at Crofton?" said Vivian presently, in rather a constrained voice.

"Well, pretty middling. Angela has lost her colour, and has been a good deal bothered with headache, and Frank had a bad cold when I left, and no wonder," and then Harry related the story of the snow storm, while Vivian eagerly questioned and commented.

"Poor little Frank!" he said; "what a naughty, lovable, brave little child she is. So you rescued her, Harry, like Sintram the lady? And her cousin has headache you say; what is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing particular. She wants a change, I think. I wish they would let me marry her at once, instead of sticking to this idiotic plan of a year's engagement."

"When are you going to be married?" Vivian asked the question in a very low voice.

"In June, I suppose; the year will be up then, and I'll be hanged if I wait any longer. You'll see me turned off, old fellow, of course?"

"I shall be in India by that time, I'm afraid."

"In India? what the devil do you mean? You're not going out there again?"

"Yes, I am going in a few weeks," said Vivian, "as soon as my book is in the hands of the publisher."

"Why on earth can't you stay quietly at home?"

"Oh, I want to collect some more materials for the second volume of my book; besides I like knocking about in barbarous regions. Civilised life becomes tame after a time. And then I *can't live* at St Michael's, and they are always badgering me to go there."

"They were awfully disgusted that you wouldn't come at Christmas time."

"I must go there for a bit, I suppose, before I sail," said Vivian, groaning, "but

it shall not be for long. What is the good of going home to fight with my father the whole time?"

"I think he treats you awfully badly, upon my soul!" said Harry. "Your allowance is ridiculously small, considering your position and his means."

"I don't mind that so much," said Vivian, "one can always get money somehow; but it drives me wild to see the property mismanaged in the way it is. The place is going to rack and ruin, the land is impoverished, the cottages,—you wouldn't put your pointers into them,—every sixpence screwed out of the tenants, and my opinion not taken about a single thing. I think I have a right to have some voice in the management, considering the condi-

tion the estate will be in by the time it comes into my hands."

"Of course you have," said Harry; "but the governor leaves everything to that scoundrel Hartopp."

"I should like to murder the brute," said Vivian, "If ever I am master, my very first action will be to turn him out, neck and crop. Upon my word, Harry, it is quite sickening to see the idiotic way in which sixpence is saved, wherever it is possible, without any consideration of the future results; and besides, my father and I are always at loggerheads about something. I am much better away."

"I thought you would have come and lived at the Priory," said Harry, in a disappointed tone. "Remember it's your

home. You are as much master there as I am ; and of course there is no need for me to tell you that every penny I have is yours."

"Dear old Harry !" said Vivian impulsively, throwing one arm round his brother's neck, and the two men walked on through the deserted streets in the old, loving fashion of their schoolboy days.

"Here we are," said Vivian at last, stopping at the large *porte cochère*. "Tell me, Harry," he said, as they mounted the stairs, "what sort of hours do you like to keep ? what time will you breakfast ?"

"Oh, *I* don't care," said Harry ; "what do you do generally ? What do you do with yourself all day ?"

"Well, I get up tolerably early, and have

my *chota hazree*, as they call it in India ; and then I write and read for some hours, or sometimes see some of my patients ; go out to a restaurant, and breakfast at about twelve o'clock. Then go for a ride, come in, write a bit more, pay visits, dine, and then one generally has two or three engagements in the evening. But I am not in the least wedded to these hours ; so settle just what you like."

"Oh, they will do capitally," said Harry.
"Here we are, ain't we?"

When they entered the *salon*, Harry walked straight up to the statue of Psyche, and stood looking at it.

"Is this your tutelar goddess?" he said.
"It's a beautiful thing; where did you get it?"

"It's the work of a very young man, Viardot by name, whom I fancy to have the makings of a great sculptor. I found him nearly starving in a garret. It is a fine piece of art, I think, don't you?" and Vivian looked lovingly at the statue, and then tenderly wiped with his handkerchief some invisible dust from off the butterfly wings.

"It has a little the look of Angel," remarked Harry.

"Has it?" said Vivian, who had bought it for that very reason. "What will you take to drink now, Harry?"

"Nothing, thanks. I think I shall go to bed; good-night, old fellow!" and Harry yawned and departed.

Vivian stood looking at the statue, a

sad expression on his pale, handsome face.

"So she is not well," he thought, "lost her colour; if I could only go to her and kiss it back again! My poor, sweet child!"

A thought crossed his mind, as it had done several times lately, that he had no right to sacrifice Angela's life and happiness, but he thought it a sophistical temptation, and would not listen to its voice. "No, she will forget at last,—when she has a child at all events,—she will be happy some day. Not as happy as I should have made her though, my treasure! Well, well, I feel like François Premier, '*Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur.*'"

Half smiling at his own folly, Vivian knelt and kissed the marble foot of the statue, and then, with a sigh, went off to bed.

•

CHAPTER II.

"In Paris it was, at the Opera there,
And she looked like a queen in a book that night,
With the wreath of pearl in her raven hair,
And the brooch in her breast so bright."

OWEN MEREDITH (Lord Lytton).

"Who was the individual who remarked
*'Paris est le lieu du monde où l'on se passe
le mieux du bonheur?'*" said Vivian, as, on
the following day, he and Harry were con-
cluding a perfect little dinner at the "*Trois
Frères*" with coffee and cigarettes. "He was
a wise man, whoever he was. Come along,
Harry, if you're ready, let us be in time for
the overture."

They were soon in the stalls of the brilliantly-lighted Opera House, Vivian apparently absorbed by the music, Harry gazing round with his lorgnettes.

"There's a handsome woman," he said. "By Jove! it's Madame de Rivièra, isn't it?"

The lady in question was sitting in the most conspicuous box in the house. She was a dark, beautiful woman, with masses of black hair, and splendid brilliant eyes. She was magnificently dressed, in coral-coloured silk, trimmed with old Spanish point-lace, and seemed literally to blaze with diamonds.

"Upon my word," remarked Harry presently, "she is a beautiful woman! She's looking at you, Vivian."

"Is she," said Vivian, indifferently. He looked up, however, and the lady acknowledged his glance by a smile, then he gazed before him again.

"Who are the people with her?" asked Harry presently.

"Madame de Theux, I think," said Vivian, "and a young Pole, Radetsky by name, who is tremendously rich, and the rage here at present, and who is desperately in love with Madame de Rivièra."

"Is De Rivièra as great a scoundrel as ever?"

"Worse, I think," said Vivian. "He drinks now, which he didn't do in days gone by; and he devotes his attention about equally, just as he did then, to horse-racing, betting, and the *corps de ballet*."

"I can't think why such a fellow isn't kicked out of any decent drawing-room!" said Harry.

"You forget, my dear fellow," said Vivian with a sneer, "that riches cover a multitude of sins. De Rivièra is fabulously wealthy. He has discovered that the amusement of speculating at the Bourse almost equals Chantilly and the *coulisses* of the 'Variétés,' and he has made some extraordinary hits. I think him to be one of the most despicable, mean, cynical, shameless scoundrels unhung, but the Parisians of the present day worship money even more than we English do."

When the curtain fell for the *entr'acte* .
Vivian rose.

"I must go and pay a visit to Madame
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de Rivièra's box, I suppose," he said; "will you come?"

"Very well," said Harry. "I have never been introduced to her."

He was rather curious to see the meeting between his brother and this lady, and to judge for himself of the correctness of Lady Treherne's suspicions. Five years before Vivian had, during a whole London season, been the devoted *cavalière servante* of the beautiful Spanish Countess, and there had been more than enough of talk on the subject, but suddenly, for some unknown cause, there had been an entire break in the friendship, liaison, or whatever it was. Vivian went to Paris to study medicine; and shortly afterwards M. de Rivièra, then in the *service diplomatique*, accepted a mission to Vienna,

his wife accompanying him. The De Rivièras had been in Vienna and Italy ever since then, but were now established in Paris, and here was Vivian, probably meeting them constantly in society.

Vivian had never spoken openly to his brother about his feelings for Madame de Rivièra, or of the cause of the break with her. He was very reserved in such matters, but Harry had gathered quite enough from his own observation, and from detached remarks of his brother's, to know that it had been a real love, and the separation a great sorrow. If Vivian were again thrown into her company, it was certainly much to be feared that the fires that seemed extinguished would break out again; and though Harry had lived in fashionable

society, where such things are matters of course, he was too naturally simple and upright-minded to think with utter levity about a love affair with a married woman.

Vivian was so different from his brother in character, that Harry had little clue to his mind or feelings, but even a casual observer would be able to predicate with tolerable certainty that such a man would have it in him to love passionately and recklessly; and, though Harry had some trust in the unwillingness of a woman of fashion to compromise herself, he had little in Vivian's common sense and thought for the future.

He followed his brother to Madame de Rivière's box, with a good deal of curiosity

and interest. The Spanish lady turned perhaps a thought paler as the two young men entered, but otherwise received them without visible consciousness, and with a fascinating grace of manner. Harry was introduced to her, and then to Madame de Theux, a pretty, sparkling little Frenchwoman, with *blonde cendrée* hair,—a good contrast to her companion.

The Pole, a tall, fair, handsome young man, scowled at the intruders, reminding Harry of the young man in "Our Mutual Friend," who was introduced as "a friend of the family," and who was in that state of mind that he looked on every one else as a "foe to the family."

Poor M. Radetsky! Madame de Rivièra had only accorded him a languid half-attention

before, and entirely ignored him now that Vivian had come. Harry made himself agreeable to Madame de Theux, and heard Vivian talking in low, gentle tones to Madame de Rivière; M. Radetsky had stalked out of the box.

The opera was very pretty, and when the curtain rose again, they were all silent, and listened attentively. Before it was over, however, Madame de Rivière rose, saying she had to go on to a ball.

"It is at Madame de Prioleau's," she said, as Vivian wrapped her *cachemire* round her; "are you not coming?"

"No, I cannot," said Vivian. "I am engaged to a supper of the *Société Dramatique et Littéraire*."

"You have turned into a hermit, this last week; I have not met you since Monday, and you have left off coming to see me."

"I am going to pay you a visit to-morrow. I have been very, very busy. My brother wishes to do himself the honour of calling on you."

The formal manner,—though Vivian spoke with his usual courteous, gentle intonation,—seemed not to be what Madame de Rivière wished or expected. She drew up her head with rather an offended look, then suddenly she smiled, a very sweet, quick, flashing smile, and said, "I shall be charmed to see him. *Your* brother must be my friend, too."

Vivian gave her his arm, and they went down the staircase. "You promised you would be my friend, Vivian," said Madame de Rivièra, when she was able to speak unheard by Captain Vane and Madame de Theux, who were following.

"So I am your friend," he answered softly. "If I can do anything for you, tell me."

"No, you can do nothing," she replied with a sigh, "except give me some of the comfort of friendship; I am so lonely."

Any one who could read Vivian's heart, would have seen in it nothing but the tenderest pity and affection, but his judgment forced him to a different response from his impulse.

"*Chère Madame,*" he replied, " we are walking on different paths in life; we have each our own troubles to bear. I am going to India again soon, and though I would gladly be with you, I know it is better not."

The hand that rested on his arm trembled ever so slightly, but in one moment Madame de Rivière looked up, and said gaily, "Yes, perhaps you are right; but while we meet we are friends, are we not?"

"I am always your friend," he answered.

"When do you go away?" she continued.

"Very soon," he replied. "When my brother leaves me, I think."

"You will come and see me some-

times. One night you must dine with us for the sake of old times. When shall it be?"

There was a little discussion about the day, and finally one was fixed, and Madame de Riviéra got into her carriage and rolled away.

"What curious creatures women are!" thought Vivian, as he left the door. "Do they really enjoy balancing themselves on the edge of a precipice? Or is she only just playing a little comedy? I really think that is it; she has been playing so many for the last four years. I cannot flatter myself with any notion of having been really remembered, since I have heard all the rivals I have had. Poor Inez! I daresay you are lonely and unhappy, but I am

beginning to think that friendship between us is a difficult game to play, and I shall see no more of you than I can help. There is no danger for me, and, perhaps, after all, it is nothing but *fatuité*, which makes me suspect any for you. At any rate, we shall only meet in society, and I don't suppose that will do much harm."

Vivian was rather silent as he and Harry walked, after the opera was over, to the café where the supper took place. Captain Vane was puffing away at his cigar and thinking about Madame de Riviéra; Vivian's thoughts were on the same subject. He had once loved her with a violent passion, but that had quite burnt out, and all his heart was too much possessed by Angela

for any other love to rest there. And yet, who can say that any love that has been true and genuine ever dies quite away? Her voice had still a fascination for him, she was still dear to him.

He had met her accidentally some weeks before at a reception. His heart had beat violently, and the blood had rushed to his cheeks when he first saw again, so suddenly and unexpectedly, the woman who had once been all the world to him.

She, however, had shown no embarrassment, but had accosted him with a sweet graciousness, as far removed from formality as from any hint of a wish to recur to old terms. She had, without openly referring to the past, given him to understand that she had forgotten, and wished to

forget it, but that he was still dear to her; would he be her *friend*, not as the cold world counts friendship, but in truth and spirit?

Vivian, though he did not let her perceive it, was doubtful at first, but he was constantly meeting her in society, and she was always the same. Her tender interest was soothing to him, his heart was so sore with aching longing;—her manner charmed him as it had done of old;—they both loved music, and were interested in politics, so they had common ground for talk, independent of personalities; gradually he had drifted into something like an intimacy. Latterly, however, her manner had changed, and Vivian was beginning to suspect that there was

danger in the position. He had purposely avoided for the last week any place where he was likely to see her, and he determined now to leave Paris as soon as possible. It was hard to respond so coldly to her appeal for friendship, but it would be worse to play with her heart and feelings, and for her own sake he determined only to see her once more. Perhaps it would be best to tell her all the truth, it might hurt her less than silence, at anyrate he was decided to see her only once again, for their intercourse was becoming dangerously like sailing round the edge of a whirlpool.

CHAPTER III.

"Misled by fancy's meteor-ray,
By passion driven ;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from heaven."

BURNS.

ON the day that had been agreed upon, Vivian went, as he had promised, to dinner at the Hôtel Rivièra.

Monsieur and Madame were alone; the first, as usual, self-satisfied, cynical, coarse, unspeakably revolting to Vivian's inmost soul; the latter, beautiful and languid, toying with her dinner, sending away one

dish after another, and leaning back in her chair, as she fanned herself slowly. She spoke little, and Vivian felt constrained and unhappy, and found it difficult to keep the ball of conversation rolling, but M. de Rivièra chatted on about politics, the theatre and racing, and talked enough to cover the silence of the other two.

When dinner was over, they adjourned to Madame's *petit salon*, where coffee was served, and the Count, after swallowing his strong *chasse*, rose, and glancing at his wife's dress, said, "Are you going anywhere to-night; you are dressed for conquest?"

"To Madame de Vigny's reception, by and by; shall you be there?"

"Possibly; I cannot tell. Yes, I will meet you there. *Au revoir, chère amie!* I go now to the *Cercle*. No, no, Vane," as Vivian rose to accompany him, "I shall not be forgiven, if I take you away. *Bon soir!*" and with a nod to Vivian, and kissing lightly the tips of his wife's fingers, M. de Rivière left the room.

An expression of dislike and contempt, which she scarcely endeavoured to conceal, had been visible in Madame de Rivière's face during this little scene: when the door shut, she breathed a long sigh, and said—

"*Dieu merci!* I have ordered my carriage at a quarter before twelve, you will stay till then, will you not? It is for the last time!"

"Yes, I will stay till then," said Vivian.
"Then, I suppose," he added, laughing,
"you will go and finish breaking the heart
of that poor young Radetsky. How close
he was riding to your carriage in the Bois
to-day!"

"So you saw me! Why did you not come
and speak to me?"

"You were surrounded with people."

"Bah! I could have got rid of them.
And you did not come to my *loge* last night;
and you did not go to Madame de Saintine's
ball, though I begged you to do so—yes,
prayed you; and it is so long since you have
been here!"

"I have been busy going about with my
brother; I have really had no time."

"*Excuses!*" said Madame de Rivière;

"never mind, you are here now! Shall I sing to you?"

She moved to the piano, and Vivian opened it for her, and arranged the lights, then drew back into the shadow while she sang. How *should* he tell her that he would never see her again?

Her song was one of Gounod's, the words of which ran thus :—

"Ce qu'est le lierre sans l'ormeau,
Qui fut l'appui de son enfance,
Lui donnant dans chaque rameau
Un échelon pour sa croissance.
Voilà ce que je suis sans toi,
Par pitié gardes moi ta foi.

"L'oiseau qui vole en gazouillant,
Vers les demeures éternelles ;
Et dont soudain un plomb sanglant
Est venu fracasser les ailes.

Voilà ce que je suis sans toi,
Par pitié gardes moi ta foi.

“ Un frêle esquif parmi les flots,
Pendant une nuit ténébreuse,
Sans gouvernail, sans matelots,
Au sein de la mer orageuse.
Voilà ce que je suis sans toi,
Par pitié gardes moi ta foi.”

Madame de Rivière's voice was a powerful and wonderfully sweet and clear soprano; she sang the first verse of the song sadly, the second passionately, the third with a ring of heart-broken despair. When the last notes had died away she rose abruptly from the piano, and swept to her chair by the fire, as she passed Vivian, suddenly looking into his eyes with her great dark ones, and saying in a low voice, "*It is true.*"

He made no answer, trying to look as if

he had not heard; but he was very pale, and his eyes were gloomy. There was a silence. Vivian took up the little silver tongs on the hearth, and arranged the logs of the wood-fire, placing little bits of wood between every log, and looking as though life depended on their mathematical accuracy of position. It was a wild, stormy night. The wind was howling, the rain rattling against the window-pane. The fire crackled and sputtered cheerily. Before it lay a large white Persian cat, stretched out at full length in the blaze, and purring comfortably.

The woodwork of the room and the furniture was all of carved ebony, inlaid with silver and ivory. Violet velvet curtains hung before the doors and windows; the

walls were pannelled with fluted violet silk, relieved by mirrors and sconces of Venetian glass. The ceiling was painted in ærial perspective,—a blue sky, rose-coloured clouds, and little cupids floating on them. There were a few good pictures, and, scattered on every table, innumerable rare and beautiful trifles—Limoges enamel, carved crystal cups, ivory caskets, Capo di Monte China. The air was heavy with the scent of hot-house flowers, which filled every corner.

The centre of all this luxury was sitting in a low chair, in an attitude of wonderful softness and grace, the glow of the fire, and the mellow radiance of the wax lights, all seeming to converge towards her. She was as splendidly beautiful and pas-

sionate-looking as Cleopatra herself, with her full stately figure, her clear, dark, transparent complexion, her masses of raven black hair, thrown back from her brow with a studied carelessness, her delicate features and her large dark eyes, in which, beneath depths of softness, lurked fire enough to melt an iceberg. She was dressed in defiance of all the canons of taste, in a bizarre and magnificent style which served to enhance her beauty, though on any other woman the effect would have been simply barbaric. She wore a dress of rich amber-coloured silk, embroidered with green beetles' wings; on her neck and arms and on her hair sparkled and shone splendid emeralds; just behind one little shell-like ear drooped a large yellow rose, so fully

blown that the petals of it were falling ; in one white jewelled hand she held a bouquet of Parma violets Vivian had brought her, in the other a large fan of peacocks' feathers.

The silence had lasted some minutes ; Vivian had put down the tongs and was looking at Madame de Riviéra, thinking of her strange beauty, when she spoke.

“ *Viviane* ” (what a low, sweet, dangerously sweet voice it was), “ why will you not stay near me ? Do not leave me ! ”

“ I *must*, ” he answered ; “ dear Madame de Riviéra, we must not see one another again, it only makes the parting harder when it comes at last.”

"Why should it come, Vivian, dear Vivian? Can we not be friends?"

"No, we cannot," he replied, "we never can be."

"Why can we not? tell me then!"

"Because I am made of flesh and blood," he replied, in a very low voice. "We never can be *friends*; you know it as well as I do. We ought never to see each other, it is playing with fire."

There was another silence. A clock in a church near by struck ten; the little silver-chimed toy on the mantelpiece answered; the Persian cat got up from the rug, yawned, stretched himself, turned round, and lay down again.

"Madame de Rivière!" said Vivian, in a pleading tone.

"*Madame de Rivière !*" repeated she reproachfully.

"Well, Inez then, dear Inez ! Let me tell you the whole truth, and then you will see and judge for me and for yourself. It is better I should trust you entirely ; then you will think as I do."

Madame de Rivière had become deadly pale, concentrated fires gleamed in her eyes.

"Continue !" she said, in a smothered voice. "You love some other woman ! I thought so ; and I have been so true to you ! But continue ! who is she ? What is her name ? Tell me quick."

"No," he said, "let me begin at the beginning ; let me tell you everything. Inez, when I left you, four, five years ago,

I loved you dearly, tenderly, passionately; I left you because I would not stay longer in a position which was as degrading to you as to me. It was like tearing my heart from my breast to go from you, but I would not continue to be your lover while you lived in the house of your husband. I saw no sin in our love itself, you had been married from a convent, as a mere child, to a man utterly unworthy of you, openly unfaithful and neglectful. I implored you to leave him and come with me. If you had done so, I would have cherished you as my dearly loved and honoured wife to the day of my death or yours,—but you refused.”

“Refused for your sake, Vivian,” said the sweet voice in a tone of pitiful pleading.

"Indeed, it was for *your* sake." Madame de Rivière was sitting looking at him, her hands clasped, her face white, her eyes dim with unshed tears.

"For my sake, so be it," he went on; "at any rate, you refused and I left you. You went to Vienna, I came here and tried to kill my grief by hard study; and, indeed, Inez, I suffered terribly; then I went to India, travelled, worked, studied, rushed into any kind of excitement or danger, all to drive your image from my mind, and at last I succeeded, it faded."

A low cry of pain broke from Madame de Rivière's lips ;—he turned a shade paler, but he went on steadily.

"Yes, it faded; do not mistake me, I

shall never cease to love you; one does not change; I have carried your portrait next my heart for all these years; but the pain and longing had gone from the love. Then I went to England, and there I learnt for the first time in my life what real love is—the desire for union of the *whole* nature, body, mind, soul, with another whose being is capable of completing and perfecting our own.”

“Yes?” said Madame de Rivière, in a dry, hard tone. “Where is she then this other soul? who is she? is she English? what is her age?”

“She is English,” he replied, “a girl, a child of eighteen or nineteen.”

“A frigid English Miss, a *pensionnaire*, an

ingénue. I did not know before that you had a *penchant* for these cold-hearted, insipid paragons of virtue ! ”

“ She is neither insipid nor frigid,” he replied coldly, “ but if she were, I do not see what that matters ; allow me to finish my story.”

“ Tell me quick, Vivian,” broke in the lady in a voice of suppressed passion. “ Why is she not your wife ? She loved you, of course she loved you ! ”

“ She is my brother’s *fiancée*.”

“ And you love her so, and give her up to him ! ”

“ No, I do not take her from him, that is the difference.”

“ Then you have left her,” said Madame de Rivièra, with an undertone of exultation

in her voice. "She can never be anything to you, never!"

"Yes, I have left her," he answered; "she can never be anything to me, never! I shall never see her again if I can help it; but she is the wife of my heart and soul, to whom, with God's help, I will be true till death!"

Madame de Rivière rose from her chair and stood before him—her beautiful face colourless, her bosom heaving, her breath coming and going.

"Vivian!" she said, "your heart is like a stone; you are cruel—cruel—cruel! Vivian, I love you so,—I have always loved you,—I have never changed. I hoped you would come back to me at last! Vivian"—and before he knew what

she would do, she fell on her knees, and seizing his hand, covered it with tears and kisses.

"Inez, dear!—Inez, *ma bien aimée!*" he said, forcibly withdrawing his hand, and raising her to the couch on which he sat; "*pour l'amour de Dieu*, do not place yourself and me in such a position!"

"Vivian!" she said, clasping her hands on his arm, "I love you,—I love you! Let me be your slave, anything, but do not leave me again! You love her, *bien!* but you cannot marry her; you love me just a little; I cannot part from you again, it would kill me!"

He rose, and paced the room in great agitation.

"Child," he said, in a voice hoarse with emotion, "for God's sake, don't talk like this! Do you think I am made of ice or of marble!"

He walked two or three times backwards and forwards, then he stopped short in front of her, and took both her hands.

"Inez," he said, looking into her eyes, "you love me, then do not even wish me to do this great sin to you and myself. Inez, I am very lonely and unhappy; you are very, very dear to me. You, too, are unhappy; if I were to remain near you, God knows what I might say or do some day! If you really love me, Inez, make me strong, not weak; for, my child, I have no real love to give you, and nothing but a true, an eternal love could

justify us in such a step. I would lay down my life to give you happiness ; but this would bring no happiness to either of us, only misery and degradation. I should be doing you a deadly wrong. Inez, help me to be true to my own heart and to you. We must part now, we must never meet again."

She looked at him ; her face flushed, then paled ; a tempest of emotions shook her.

She was scorned, refused ! For one moment she hated him with fury ; no, she loved him, he should not conquer,—she would *make* him be hers. She knew she could win back all his love in time. She did not speak.

" Inez," he said again, " I must leave you ;

my child, I love you too much to do you such a wrong. *For my sake*, be brave, be strong."

For one moment more wild conflict shook her soul; then the true noble woman's nature rose stronger than vanity, stronger than pride, stronger than passion, conquered the evil influences of her life and education; rising and standing before him, she said firmly, "Yes, dear Vivian, go, you are right; go now. God bless you; go."

His eyes filled with tears; he took her hand, and bending his head over it, said, "I do more than love you now; I revere you, I worship you! God bless you, my good, true woman!"

He pressed his lips to her hands, and left

the room ; while she, left alone, burst into an agony of tears. Poor, poor Inez ! She had lost all, even the past ; for he had never, even then, truly loved her. She had no future, no child to love and live for,—no hope, no comfort, nothing but despair !

CHAPTER IV.

"The hour which might have been, yet might not be,
Which man's and woman's heart conceived and bore,
Yet whereof life was barren,—on what shore
Bides it the breaking of Time's weary sea?"

D. G. ROSSETTI.

VIVIAN went out into the streets, and for hours wandered backwards and forwards, heedless of the rain and sleet, not knowing where he was going, or how time passed. He was utterly miserable; the dark river, rolling under the lighted bridges, seemed to say to him, "Come to me and be at rest."

He was no steadfast, faultless hero, but a man,—with a weak, passionate, tempest-tossed, aching, human heart. No doubt he deserved to suffer; but I have never found that to own that we have brought suffering on ourselves makes it any the less bitter. How blind, how weak he had been! Why had he ever met Madame de Rivièra again? How his heart bled for her!—how dear she was still to him! Why must he bring a curse to all he loved on earth?

Vivian suffered a torture that night of which colder natures can form no conception. He seemed to have lost his foothold, and to be tossed on a sea of despair. He felt as if demons were battling for his soul. Angela's face rose before him, passion-

pale, as he had seen it last, wet with tears, hers and his own. He loved her with every fibre of his nature, and he had brought misery to her also; he had betrayed his brother's trust, he was but suffering for his own sin. He hoped, prayed, that some day she might be happy with Harry, but there was a voice in his heart which kept repeating to him his own words to Madame de Rivièra :

“ True love, the desire for union of the *whole* nature. Without that union one must be incomplete. She can never have it with another, any more than I can; she ought to be mine,—it is God's law. She is not married,—there is no such bond to keep her from me; how can she be happy with Harry or he with her,

while she loves me? And she *must* love me; it is in the nature of things. We are the completion and perfection of each other."

What was this voice? the truth struggling to be heard, or some tempting demon's specious words? A demon, Vivian thought, with a cunning, cruel, fair, beautiful temptation. He had fought all that battle before; he had decided; he would not listen to this counsel of temptation, coming to him now in his hour of weakness. He longed for her so, he worshipped her so, it must be a temptation. He had been weak in remaining near her one minute after he saw that he loved her; he had been worse than weak, treacherous, when he told her of his love; he had dishonoured

himself then, but he would not complete the wrong.

“ If I throw away the first law that binds all men, the simple law of honour, at least let me be sure I am putting a higher rule in its stead, not the sophistical arguments of an overwhelming temptation. Besides, I know the poor, sweet darling will find peace and rest at last. Time and nature are strong ; her children, and the father of her children, will fill her heart, —as for me, I could almost thank God that I suffer as I do, I deserve it so thoroughly.”

At last he went home, roused the sleeping *concièrge*, and mounted the stairs to his own apartment. As he passed Harry's door, though he trod

lightly, his brother's voice called him in.

"Hallo, Vivian! here you are at last; sit down here a minute, will you?"

Vivian sat down on the foot of the bed; the wood-fire had nearly burnt itself out, only a few logs still smouldering; the room was dark.

"Thank heaven for that!" thought Vivian; but how to stifle all emotion from his voice?

"Why, you're wet through!" said Harry; "is it raining?"

"Raining? snowing, I think," said Vivian.

Harry loved his brother, so he could hear suffering in the tone of his voice. He was longing to give some advice, but it was difficult to speak on a subject which was

not his business, and on which Vivian had never given him his confidence. Still Harry felt that he could not see his brother ruin himself without one word of warning.

"I say, Vivian," he said suddenly, "ain't you going it rather too much with Madame de Rivière? There will be a blow-up some day, I'm afraid."

"What do you mean?" said Vivian, hastily.

"Oh, only people are beginning to talk. I heard some fellows at the *Cercle* to-night backing you against Radetsky. For God's sake, don't go on with an affair which can only end in her ruin, and probably yours too. There will be a scandal, and then,—if I know anything of you,—you

will bolt with her, and it would be the ruin of you!"

"I don't know what you mean," said Vivian. "There will be no scandal, there is no end coming; she is a good, true, noble woman, whom I admire and respect with all my heart and soul. And if I hear a word against her, by heaven, whoever says it shall eat his words! Who did you hear talking of her? did you contradict it? I'll see if they dare repeat it to me!"

"Good heavens, Vivian, be reasonable!" said Harry; "don't work yourself into a fever," for Vivian had jumped up in his excitement. "How should I contradict them? I know nothing on the subject. For heaven's sake, don't go and make a fool of yourself about this woman! It isn't the

first time she's been talked about ; she's had one lover after another."

"Stop, Harry!" said Vivian, in a voice of deep passion; "don't mention her but with the deepest respect; whoever told you a word against her, said a damned lie!"

"All right," said Harry, "it's no business of mine; I only speak for your sake, because I don't like to see you go to the devil without lifting up a finger to stop you. Vivian, old boy, be sensible! You *can't* stop people's tongues, except by cutting the affair."

"Well," said Vivian, with a short, scornful, sorrowful laugh, "I'm going to England in a few days, and to India very shortly; I suppose that will be *cutting* the

affair! I know you mean kindly, dear old fellow," he added in a softened voice, "forgive me if I have spoken like an ill-tempered brute. I'm the most miserable devil on the face of the earth. Well, that's no reason why I should keep you awake," he went on, with another laugh; "good-night, or rather good-morning, for it's after four o'clock."

"Good-night, Vivian," said Harry, in an affectionate voice, and Vivian left the room, stopping at the door to say—

"I assure you, you can set your mind at rest; she is nothing to me, nor I to her! 'What's Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba, that I should weep for her?' The post-chaise and pair has not been ordered yet!"

Harry did not believe a word of it. His brother's excited defence and evident emotion had only deepened the impression that he loved this woman ; that *she* loved Vivian he felt sure, for the way she looked at him was quite enough to betray her,—it was a bad look-out.

The next morning Vivian's servant came into his room with a note, a dainty note on violet perfumed paper, written in the hand he knew so well.

"Vivian, my adored," it began, "I leave Paris this morning for my own country. I go to my sister and her children, where perhaps I may find peace and rest. I can bear this hollow glitter of the world no more. In my sister's quiet household,

amid the prattle of her innocent children, life, if sad, will be calm and natural. For you, dear Vivian, I pray, yes, I pray, you may find happiness at last. I will never forget you. Think sometimes of,—

INEZ."

A tear, that seemed like a drop of molten lead as it fell from Vivian's eye, blotted the signature as he read. With a bitter pang in his heart he put the poor little note away; but regret was useless, sorrow vain; he could not amend the harm which he, though unwittingly, had done, and it was unmanly to complain of the suffering which he himself endured. He regretted that passing avowal of his unhappiness which he had made to Harry;

what a fool he was to have said anything about it! He had got to bear it, and he might as well keep his fox decently hidden beneath the cloak; so he braced himself to endurance, and began another day of heart-ache, stifled by endless distractions.

First, there were his patients to see—poor people who came to him for medical attendance gratis, twice every week. The more complicated cases he handed over to Gerard, paying him for his attendance, but others he looked after himself, and it was a real, tangible way of doing a little bit of good in his generation. The doctor is always a trusted friend with the poor, and he was able to get many glimpses behind the scenes, and

to help many a one through times of hard and sore struggle.

After the sick people came breakfast with Harry at a *restaurant*. Then he had to pay a visit to the Library, to verify some of the data of his book. Then he joined Harry in a visit to the studio of a celebrated artist; then came a gay dinner with a party of English people at "Champeaux;" then a secret political meeting; and finally, an hour's study at Arabic before he went to bed.

There was little time left for sad reflection, though unhappiness was underneath, like the presence of pain beneath an opiate. This was a fair specimen of one of Vivian's days, and it was no wonder that hard work and secret unhappiness combined,

made him look ill and worn. When Harry left Paris a few days afterwards, it was with a mind full of anxiety on his brother's account, both for his health and his future prospects.

CHAPTER V.

"Love is strong as death ; jealousy is cruel as the grave."

SONG OF SOLOMON.

"WILL you come and blow the organ-bellows for me, Jim?" inquired Angela one afternoon.

"All serene!" said Jim. "I'm your man ; come on."

"May we go too?" asked Nelly and Ethel.

"Yes, if you like, and will keep quiet ;" so there was a general adjournment to the

priest's room. Nelly and Ethel sat in the deep window-seat, and played with their dolls, Jim blew the bellows with great energy, and Angela was soon lost in a world of harmony, as she played, first the "Pastoral Symphony," then a movement from Pergolesi, and then a grand fugue of Sebastian Bach's. She was quite happy while in this world, the music brought so many pictures and thoughts to her mind; now a forest, with the storm crashing through it, now a great, dim cathedral, now a mighty river, rolling resistless to the sea.

In about half an hour there was an interruption. "Here comes Harry in a cab!" called out Ethel; "may I open the window, and tell him to come up here?"

"Very well," was the answer; and presently Harry appeared.

"Well, my pet, how are you?" he said. "How de do, Ethel and Nelly. Go on blowing, Jim, I don't want to interrupt the music."

"Oh, I daresay!" said Jim; "I have no doubt you prefer my room to my company. Come along, Nell and Ethel," and he pushed them out of the room before him.

"Well, here I am again!" said Harry; "and precious glad to be with you once more. Are you glad to see me?"

"Yes," said Angela, submitting passively to her lover's caress. "Did you have a good crossing?"

"No, beastly rough, and I was nearly frozen in the train, too."

"Poor dear! And you will have another journey to-morrow, won't you?"

"Yes, to Brighton, for that idiotic ball; worse luck! I wish I could stay quietly with you, but I suppose I must go, as I have promised."

The *fiancés* talked commonplaces of this description for a short time, then Harry said—

"Go on playing, my pet, I will blow for you."

"It will give you a lot of trouble," said Angela; "and you won't hear so well."

"Oh, this organ is easy to blow; besides, I like something to do, I can't bear sitting still. Play me something,—do; not one of your tiresome fugues or

symphonies though, something with a tune in it."

Angela accordingly played the soldier's chorus from "Faust," and then the Prayer from Masaniello, and her choice met with Harry's unqualified approval. She did want to please and make him happy, but if only they had cared for some of the same things how much easier it would have been?

When she had finished playing, she turned round on the seat and said, "Harry, wouldn't you like to go and look at your horses? I will go with you."

"Will you? How jolly of you! I wish to goodness it would thaw, it's a sin to have all these brutes eating their heads off in the stable."

They accordingly went over to the stables, and Angela patted and fed with sugar all the horses, while Harry smoked, talked to his head groom, and examined legs and fetlock joints. Presently he looked round at Angela.

"How pale you are!" he said; "what is the matter?"

"I have a bad headache," replied the girl, "that is all."

"*All?* it's a good deal, I think, poor dear! come in and lie down and take care of yourself."

He drew her hand through his arm, and led her to the house, and into the little morning-room; there he made her lie on the sofa, and getting some eau-de-cologne and water, put a handkerchief wetted with

it on her head. He was very tender and gentle, and Angela felt a remorseful gratitude for his kindness, mingled with longing that she could only love him more.

They were both silent. The fire was burning with a ruddy glow in the deepening twilight, gleaming now on the corner of a gilt picture-frame, now on a Venetian glass ornament, now on the cottage piano, with its piles of music, the flower-stand in the window or the dwarf book-case, with its gaily bound volumes.

It was a comfortable, pretty scene: the warm fire-glow, the dainty, scented room, Angela lying on the large sofa amongst the piles of soft cushions, with her lover seated on a low stool beside her, his

handsome face full of protecting tenderness and gentle solicitude. Any one, looking through the window, would have thought it a picture of perfect happiness.

Angela was longing to hear something about Vivian; several times she had led up to the subject, but Harry had not mentioned his name; she now spoke again.

"What did you do in Paris, Harry?"

"Well, I went to the theatre and opera a great deal, and to several balls and receptions, and I dined with Communists and atheists."

"What *do* you mean?"

"Just exactly what I say. You never saw such a queer lot as Vivian is in

with ; poets and artists, and doctors and journalists, of what he calls 'advanced opinions.' Fellows who want to do away with Christianity, and marriage, and property, and everything. Vivian's a rum lot ! But he's the best fellow I ever met, for all that," continued Harry, with unwonted enthusiasm. " There isn't any one in the world like him. He's a genius, I do think. I never met any one so clever and brilliant, and who knew so much about so many things ; and there's not a bit of conceit in him, he is perfectly unassuming, and he is so good-hearted and affectionate."

Angela could make no answer to this outburst, and there was another silence.

"Where is your brother?" said Angela

presently; she spoke the last word very low. "How is he?"

"He came over with me; he is at home now,—St Michael's, I mean. I don't think he's at all well,—in fact, I am not easy about him. He looks ill, and I don't wonder, it is enough to kill him the life he leads. He never goes to bed before four o'clock in the morning,—burning the candle at both ends I call it; and he rushes about from one thing to another, and is never quiet a moment. Besides"——

"Besides what?" said Angela.

"Well, I am awfully afraid that he is going to cut his own throat for good and all."

"What!" said Angela, starting up.

"Metaphorically, I mean," said Harry, with a short laugh, "but he might as well do it literally."

He stopped again.

"Go on," said Angela, in a low voice.

"Well, I suppose I oughtn't to tell you, but I am very unhappy about it, and you really are my wife, you know; I trust you entirely; I wouldn't tell any one else in the world. You know that Madame de Rivièra Aunt Adelaide spoke of?"

Angela made a sign of assent.

"Well, she's in Paris now, and Vivian sees her constantly, I believe, and she is evidently desperately in love with him; any one can see it by the way she looks at him, and he was mad about her once, I know. There will be a regular scandal

before long, or they will make a bolt of it, and then Vivian might just as well hang himself at once. Poor old Vivian ! I would cut my right hand off to save him from it."

"I thought he was soon going out to India again," said Angela, with a calmness that surprised herself. •

"He says he is going to sail in three weeks' time, but he may change his mind ; or if he does go, she will go with him, or I'm much mistaken. Poor old Vivian ! he is not the man ever to throw a woman overboard if she does such a thing for him, he is much too honourable and good-hearted, and it would be tying a mill-stone round his neck in good earnest. It would be the ruin of his life."

"But are you *sure*, Harry?" said Angela in a smothered voice, through which rang nevertheless a tone of pain.

"I'm not *sure*, for he never gave me an opening to say much to him on the subject. Once I said something, and he denied everything about it; but of course he would do that, any man would!"

"What is she like, Harry?"

"Very handsome; a dark, voluptuous sort of looking woman, with a very sweet smile; sings beautifully, and is clever and fascinating, I believe. I never spoke ten words to her in my life."

"Has she a quantity of black hair, thrown off a low forehead, and great dark eyes, and a pale face?"

"Yes," said Harry, "how do you know?"

"I saw a picture in a locket he carries about."

"That's she," said Harry; "I have seen the locket too."

Angela got up from the sofa, and knelt down in front of the fire. Little jets of flame were springing up; Angela watched them and the soft gas-bubbles, as though they interested her deeply. What curious figures the coals made, like castles and rocks,—like the Rhine crags. Suddenly she felt a mad inclination to put her hand into the burning coals, that some sharp physical pain might overwhelm this numb torpor of misery.

Harry seized her hand as she moved
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it mechanically. "Child! what are you doing?" he said; "you will burn yourself. How icy cold your hand is, and your forehead burning. What is the matter, darling? do you feel very ill? is your headache very bad?"

"Yes, very," said Angela, in a hoarse voice; "I think I will go to bed, Harry, I feel very unwell."

She stood up, and seemed to turn giddy for a moment, for she grasped his arm and tottered. Captain Vane felt much alarmed.

"What is it, darling? are you faint? shall I call anybody?"

"No, just help me upstairs, I feel sick and dizzy, but I shall be all right when I go to bed."

"I hope you are not going to be ill," said Harry, in an anxious tone; "I sha'n't go away and leave you to-morrow, if you are not better."

"Oh, I shall be all right to-morrow, it is only a bad headache; besides, you must go to Lady Treherne's ball. Just help me up the stairs, will you, Harry? I feel so giddy."

He supported her to the door of her room, and then sent old Nurse to her, who undressed her and put her to bed, Angela remaining quite passive in her hands.

"How do you feel now, Missie?" said the old woman, when the girl's head was resting on the pillow. "Do you think you could eat any dinner?"

"No, thank you, Nurse," replied Angela, "I don't want anything, only to be left alone and quiet."

"Well, I daresay that is the best thing for you; just touch your bell if you want anything. I won't let no one come in till you do, or any way till I think you have had time to have a sleep, poor lamb! I hope it will do your head good." Nurse softly left the room.

No sooner had the sound of footsteps died quite away, than Angela got out of bed, locked her door, and walked rapidly up and down the room in her night-dress, her hands convulsively clasped together, a feverish flush in her cheeks,—she was sick at soul with longing and jealousy. She felt very ill, her head was aching and

throbbing so painfully, she was burning hot one minute, shivering the next, connected thought was impossible ; her will and reason seemed helpless, bound hand and foot, while she was whirled like a leaf in a tempest of fierce emotions. From time to time an outspoken ejaculation came from her.

“I love him! Mother of God, how I love him! Is it true? can it be true?—What right has any other woman to him? he is mine! Vivian, my Vivian! My darling, my love! You do love me;—you did love me, and I am yours,—yes, I am yours; I cannot belong to any but you. Vivian, come to me,—come to me, Vivian; you *do* love me, don’t you?”

Again came to her mind every loving

word he had spoken, every tone and touch, and an actual physical sickening pain compressed her heart as she pictured that beautiful, melancholy-looking woman, listening to those sweet words, looking with eyes of love into his.

In this hour of physical weakness the rational part of Angela's nature was prostrate; the vivid imagination swayed all with resistless power, and the poor child seemed tortured by some malicious demon, as picture after picture rose before her. Vivian with another, Vivian loving another, one he had always loved, whose portrait he wore on his heart.

Hope, faith, trust, struggled hard against this deadly pain, but the terrible fiend seemed stronger. "He never loved you

really, that is why he gave you up so easily." "But I *know* he loved me, his words were fire, his look was truth!" "Love! do you call that love which could give you to another man? He had a passing fancy for you, that is all; you gave your heart for nothing; he loves another woman."

Jealousy seemed to shake her very soul, but it was indicative of her nature, that, through all the pain, mingled not one faintest tinge of anger or resentment against Vivian, and not one shadow of hatred to the unknown Madame de Rivière. She, Angela, was broken-hearted, that was no reason why she should feel any aversion to this dark, sad-looking woman, who loved him too, who had suffered too. "Though

she cannot love him so much as I do," gasped out poor Angela, between choking sobs; "I am his with every bit of my soul and body. O Vivian, love me, love me, love me!"

The girl seemed literally torn with this agony. She was lying on the floor quivering with sobs, feeling as if half ice, half fire, and though she could not think of physical pain during this mental torture, she was dimly conscious that she was very ill.

The hours of that terrible night passed by; once there came a step to the door, the handle was turned, then there was a soft knock. Angela did not move nor answer, and the steps went away again. The fire burnt itself out, Angela took no

heed; what were cold and darkness to her? She was truly conscious of nothing; fever-heat, shivering chill, languid frame, aching head and limbs,—all were nothing to her,—only this alternation of fierce conflict and deadly despair.

It may seem strange that in this tumult of jealous longing, she should so completely have ignored her own position as the betrothed bride of another man. But, be it remembered, she was at the moment really ill, incapable as a child or a savage of reasonable calm thought and judgment, so nature had it all her own way, and the girl felt with all the simplicity and genuineness of passion.

It was about four in the morning when she rose from the floor, and, groping her

way to the bed, threw her exhausted limbs upon it. She seemed aching from head to foot, and a swooning languor possessed her. The sharpest pangs of jealousy had died away, she was now able to think as well as to feel, and there came to her, all at once, the remembrance of Harry and her position towards him—his promised wife, bound to him.

“How wrong I have been, how wrong I have been!” she cried. “I should have told him the truth at once, I can’t marry him, it would be a terrible, awful sin, loving Vivian as I do. I should have known it all along, I should have told him long ago, then it would have been less hard for him perhaps. But at any rate, it must be done now. I will not sin any

longer against love and truth, yes, and against Harry himself, too, for what greater sin could I do him than by becoming his wife, with a heart filled with passion for another man? Poor Harry, dear Harry! oh *why* does he love me. Oh, if I could only spare him suffering by *any* sacrifice, but to marry him would be the cruelest wrong I could do him. O my God! why is life so hard? How dreadful it will be to tell him,—and perhaps, after all, I have no right to do so. Vivian must not be compromised; but no, I can tell him without saying Vivian's name. I must say I love some one, for Harry will beg me to try and love him, but I will beg him not to ask who the some one

is. He is so kind and honourable, he will grant me that, I know. O Harry, poor, dear, tender-hearted Harry! how can I tell you? But I must do it; at once too, I must be false no longer; I must wait till he comes back from Brighton though, for I feel too ill and weak to speak before. I wonder if I am going to have an illness! Perhaps so; perhaps I shall die. That would be the simplest and happiest plan for everybody. I wish I could, I wish I could. What are those lines?

“O death, death, death,
Pass by the happy souls that love to live,
And shadow all my soul that I may die;
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids; let me die.”

Presently came a knock at the door.

"Who is that?" asked Angela faintly:

"Only Nurse; open the door, please, Missie, dear."

Angela got out of bed, turned the key, and then returned to bed, while the door opened, and disclosed a Rembrandt-looking figure—Nurse carrying in one hand a tray, in the other a candle, which cast a reddish yellow glow on her wrinkled face and white cap.

"How are you now, ma'am? Did you have a pretty good night?"

"My head aches a great deal," said Angela; "what o'clock is it, Nurse? is it morning?"

"A quarter to seven, Missie. Poor dear, I *am* sorry you are so bad still. I have brought you a cup of tea."

"Thank you very much, Nurse, I am dreadfully thirsty," and Angela sat up in bed.

"Let me put a shawl round you, Missie, it is bitter cold this morning. Can't you eat a bit of toast? do. You have had nothing to eat for so long."

"No, I couldn't," said Angela, shutting her eyes; "oh, my head is so bad, I must try to go to sleep."

"Well, I will leave you then, Missie; can't I do nothing for you?"

"No, thank you," was the weary answer, "I daresay I shall be better soon. Don't tell Captain Vane my headache is still so bad, Nurse, or he won't like to go away, and I don't want him to lose the ball. Give him my love, say that I am not quite well yet, but that I had much rather he went at the time he

settled—the ten o'clock train, you know—and didn't alter his plans for me. Say that I shall be quite well by and by, only I am lazy, and want to stay in bed and rest. Now, Nurse, mind, really, if you make him think I am ill I will never forgive you."

"Very well, Miss Angel, just as you like. You try now and get some sleep, it would be the best thing for you," and after shaking up the pillows and smoothing the bedclothes, Nurse departed.

After tossing about for a short time, Angela did drop off to sleep, and when Harry sent up to inquire for her she was still asleep. He wrote her a loving little note of farewell, and went off to town on his way to Brighton.

Angela awoke from her sleep at about eleven o'clock, so very feverish, so racked with headache, and so mentally confused, that Nurse, thoroughly alarmed, went in search of Mr Willoughby to beg him to send at once for the doctor.

The Squire was very anxious and distressed, when, after a visit to Angela's room, he saw for himself the girl's state, and his anxiety was by no means lessened when the doctor arrived, for he pronounced her to be in the first stage of a nervous, if not of a brain fever.

CHAPTER VI.

"Love he comes, and Love he tarries,
Just as fate or fancy carries,
Longest stays when sorest chidden,
Laughs and flies when press'd and bidden."

CAMPBELL.

WHEN at about four o'clock Captain Vane arrived at No. — Brunswick Square, Brighton, he found Lady Treherne in her usual attire—white hair, Mechlin lace, black satin dress—seated in an arm-chair by the fire, her white, pretty old hands, with the blue veins standing out on them, diamond - ringed, black - mittened hands,

crossed on her lap. On the hearth-rug lay a large Persian cat, on the sofa a little pug dog, with the blackest of noses and curliest of tails. In the window was a white cockatoo, swinging himself slowly backwards and forwards, and gazing at the cat with a wicked, cold, grey eye of deadly enmity.

Lady Treherne welcomed her grand-nephew warmly and graciously.

"I am glad to see you, very glad. Come to the fire, you must be cold. Now, what can I offer you? sherry? some of my tea? or a *petit verre* of cognac? Tea? Do you really prefer that? bring tea at once, James, if you please. Frank will be in presently to pour it out for you, and now sit down and tell

me all the news. You came from Paris yesterday you say, and Vivian, where is he?"

"He came over with me."

"*Bien, bien*,—was I right in what I told you, Mr Harry, eh?" Harry looked disconcerted. "Is Madame de Rivière there?"

"Yes."

"Was Vivian often with her?"

"Sometimes," assented Harry, reluctantly.

"Did you ever see them together?"

"Once or twice."

"I am told she is desperately in love with him."

"I don't know how people can judge," said Harry, in an annoyed tone. "I wish they

would keep their eyes and tongues to themselves."

"My dear Harry, people *will* talk, and Madame de Rivière, beautiful and fascinating, surrounded by admirers, and always more or less the rage, is certainly not the woman to escape comment. Besides, people have not forgotten all the talk there was years ago; when was it? four—five years ago, when there was that duel; and now, when the two are together again, and she shows her feelings as openly as she does, how can you wonder that there is gossip? No one can deny that *il y en a de quoi*."

"People are confoundedly ill-natured," said Harry; "they are always so ready to talk scandal."

Lady Treherne shrugged her shoulders. "People talk of what they see. You have lived in the world, my dear Harry, and you must know what is the meaning of such an intimacy. If only there is not an elopement it will not matter much."

"For God's sake, don't talk of it, Aunt Adelaide!" said Harry with sudden heat. "I hope to heaven Vivian will not be so mad. He might as well shoot himself as that!"

"He would not be the first man who has given up everything for a beautiful face," said Lady Treherne in a philosophical tone. "Now, Harry, what else are *you* marrying for?"

"I love a good, pure girl, at all

events," said Harry, indignantly, "not a coquette, if no worse, who has been talked of in London, Paris, and Vienna, and the Lord knows where besides, for the last eight or ten years. Besides, I don't love my future wife for her beauty alone."

"You think not, but you would find your mistake were she not so lovely. She does not suit you in the very least, quite independently of all disadvantages of family and position, and she does not love you,—any more than you love me."

"*What?*" said Harry, a dark red flush mounting up to the roots of his hair. "What do you mean, Aunt Adelaide? how do you dare say such a thing to me?"

"Harry, my dear," said the old lady, standing up before him, and putting a hand on his, "don't be angry with an old woman for telling you the plain truth. I love you, child, and I don't like to see you give your heart to a woman who has none to give you in return."

"What makes you think so?" said Harry, his anger subdued by Lady Treherne's unwonted softness, "how can you tell?"

"How can I tell?" was the return. "Bah, bah! I am not a baby! I have not lived all these years in the world for nothing. How can I tell? In a thousand ways!"

"How?" he asked quickly.

"Shall I tell you? Well, a woman who loves will make a thousand excuses to touch the man she loves. I never once saw Angela Willoughby touch you voluntarily. A woman who loves must follow with the eyes her lover, hears his voice whenever he speaks. I never saw Angela looking at you, and, if I noticed it once, I noticed it a dozen times, even during the few days I was at Crofton, that she would be constantly in some reverie, and so *distracte* that she had not even heard your voice when you spoke to her."

Harry got up from his chair, and walked up and down the room in great agitation, pulling at the ends of his long moustache.

"Remember, Aunt Adelaide," he said, stopping short, "she is a young girl, a child; she is loving and affectionate, but I doubt whether it is in her nature to love as you mean."

Lady Treherne shook her head.

"The gunpowder is there when the match is put to it," she said. "Besides, what makes the girl so pale and sad-looking?"

"Does she look sad?"

"Whenever she is natural she does, and I ask you, is it natural that a girl who is engaged should be sad if she loves her *fiancé*? No, Harry, you are throwing away your love on a woman who does not care for you, and all the time, pretty, fresh, innocent little

Frank is breaking her heart about you!"

"Oh no!" said Harry, with a short, sarcastic laugh; "you're dreaming, Aunt Adelaide."

"Am I?" said the old lady, nodding. "God didn't give me eyes for nothing, my nephew. Frank is as proud as Lucifer, she would die sooner than own it, even to herself, but she is breaking her heart about you."

At this moment the footman came in with lights and coals;—does not the footman always come in with coals or something at the most critical moments of life?—and while the fire was being made up, Frank appeared in a high felt hat, a rough pea-jacket, short skirt, and

neat little boots, with a bright, wild-rose flush in her cheeks, her blue eyes shining.

She made the tea, chatting away about the people she had met in her walk, gave the cat and the pug some cream, and the cockatoo a lump of sugar, while meantime she asked Harry some questions about Paris, Vivian, and all at Crofton.

He replied rather curtly, in an absent manner, and presently rose, saying he should go out and smoke a cigar before dinner.

He strolled down the King's Road—on one side the gay, brilliantly lighted shop-windows, the blazing gas-lamps, the stream of people, on the other the wide, dark sea. As

he walked, gradually the tumult of fear, trouble, anger, caused by Lady Treherne's words, subsided, and he called himself a fool for having let them affect him,—“the interference of a meddling old woman, who knew nothing of the matter;” yet the pain was still there, as, through all the bustle of people and roll of carriages, the sound of the waves might be heard monotonously breaking on the shingle. Harry, however, was of the nature that will not dwell on painful thoughts, so he crushed down the doubts which had rushed in on him, and strove to distract his mind by gazing into the shop-windows, and by the soothing effects of his smoke.

By the time Lady Treherne's dinner-hour came, he was apparently quite bright and

indifferent again, but his aunt did not doubt that her words would "bring forth fruit in due season." One small blossom they put forth that very night. Harry looked at Frank with quite other eyes than he had ever done before. Of course Lady Treherne's notion about her was too ridiculous to be thought of for a moment. Still he could not help being almost unconsciously flattered by it, and the admiration and attention which Frank received at the ball half pleased him, half caused him curious, absurd tinges of something a little like jealousy.

He danced a good deal with her himself, and certainly she was a charming girl, so free and open, with so much *bon camaraderie* that made it easy to get on

with her, and at the same time such a thorough *lady*. Had his heart been free, she was just the girl he could have loved.

CHAPTER VII.

"Can I love thee, my beloved,—can I love thee?
And is *this* like love, to stand
With no help in my hand,
When, strong as Death, I fain would watch above thee?
My love-kiss can deny
No tear that falls beneath it;
Mine oath of love can swear thee
From no ill that comes near thee,
And thou diest while I breathe it,
And I,—I can but die!
May God love thee, my beloved,—may God love thee!"

E. B. BROWNING.

THE following morning Harry was awakened by a servant with a telegraphic message. It contained these words:—

“G. WILLOUGHBY to CAPTAIN VANE.

“Come at once,—Angel is very ill. Nervous fever. Have telegraphed to town to Baldwin. No danger at present, but great cause for anxiety. Bring Frank home.”

Harry jumped out of bed, pale and trembling.

“What o'clock is it? Have a cab here to go to the 10 express, James, and send this telegram to Miss Willoughby; tell her I am going by the ten o'clock train. Ask her to let Lady Treherne know.”

It was all bustle and confusion. Frank, deadly pale, but clear and composed, was

dressed and ready to start as soon as Harry himself. The maid was cramming things into a travelling-bag, trying to make Frank swallow some breakfast, crying herself all the time. Miss Angela's sweet face and voice and kindly consideration won the hearts of all who came near her.

That was a wretched journey. Harry and Frank dared not look in each other's faces to read the terror written there. How slow the train seemed to be! How insupportable the waiting in London for the train down to Crofton! Miserable and full of dread as Harry was though, he observed Frank's pallor, and made her drink some hot coffee during that half hour of waiting, telling her with truth, that if

she wished to be of use, she must keep her own strength up. Then came the two hours journey down to Crofton, and Mr Willoughby to meet them at the station, his face full of trouble.

"Just the same," he said; "Dr Baldwin is here; he says Lamb's treatment is perfectly right, and that if one can only keep her strength up, all will go well; but the system seems thoroughly exhausted, and the fever is very high. She is quite unconscious. How are you, Frank, my child? Keep up your heart; you know we must do all we can, and trust to God Almighty's mercy. I am glad the boys have gone back to school. It makes it easier to have perfect quiet."

The Angel of Sickness in a house is a

very dread visitor. All ordinary ways of life are suspended, and the household think of little but the tidings from that room, before the door of which all move with hushed voices and light footsteps.

Angela's young life was strong, and wrestled hard with the fever, but it was a deadly struggle, and several times the doctors and all around gave up hope. A trained nurse from a London hospital had command of the sick-room; but there were plenty of volunteers: Frank, who was a born sick-nurse, ready, tender, full of quiet decision and presence of mind; old Nurse, whose experience was valuable; and Harry, who begged hard for permission to do something, if ever so little. Poor

Harry, it was terrible to see his love lying there in the very grasp of death, and to be so powerless to help—his strength of body and will without avail to save that dear life that seemed to be slipping from him.

No one thought of Vivian. Harry had written to his mother, but it did not occur to him to inform Vivian of Angela's danger, till he one day received a letter written from London, in which his brother said that he had taken his passage for India in ten days time, and was now going to pay a farewell visit at home; would Harry come down and join him there?

Harry then wrote a note, telling Vivian of Angela's illness, and saying that,

though somewhat better, she was still in danger.

In reply he received a telegram, saying—

“Please let me know how she is to-day and all particulars. Am very anxious. Ask Lamb for a consultation. Have telegraphed to Gerard, a very clever French doctor, to come over this evening. He will be at Crofton by the mail train. Trust him entirely. Have sent messenger with letter.”

By a special messenger came letters to Harry and Frank. Frank's was as follows :—

"DEAR FRANK,—

I do not know whether you have been clear-sighted enough to guess at the state of affairs, at any rate I must trust to your kind heart and power of keeping a secret, for, Frank, I *must* know how she is. For God's sake, write to me every day, twice a day, if you will, dear Frank, and tell me everything.

"I shall stop in London. It is all I can do to keep from going down to Crofton. I stay away to avoid giving any unnecessary pain and trouble, for I could not be there and not betray myself, but, Frank, if she wants me I must go. If I can do anything I must go. I trust to you entirely. Tell me what is best for her. If

she asks for me telegraph at once. Write me a *full* account, tell me every detail, I am in hell now.

“What measures are you taking? I have telegraphed to a friend of mine, a very clever French doctor of the new school, to come over to-day. In fever cases he can do all, I believe, that mortal man can do; Lamb must consult with him; and, for God’s sake, Frank, have his directions obeyed implicitly, to the very letter, all depends on careful nursing. For the sake of *all*, dear Frank, keep my secret. Say nothing of this letter, but write by every post or I shall go mad, and if to see me would do her good, telegraph.

“Your affectionate cousin,

“V. V.”

The letter to Harry was written in a style of forced calmness, but entreating him to let Gerard have the entire management of the case, and speaking in the highest terms of his talent, knowledge, and the wonderful cures he had made.

To these letters Harry despatched an answer, giving an account of Angela's state, thanking Vivian for his telegram to Dr Gerard, and saying that Dr Lamb had gladly agreed to a consultation. Frank's letter was as follows :—

“DEAR VIVIAN,—

I am very sorry for you, but you have done quite harm enough. Don't come here. She might find it out, and any agitation would kill her. She is,

we hope, rather better this morning. We are doing all we can. I promise you that the French doctor shall have his orders *strictly* attended to. I will let you know every day, and, of course, I will tell no one. I am very sorry for you.

“Your affectionate cousin,

“FRANK.”

What a haggard face it was that met Dr Gerard at the station when the Dover train came in! Vivian was pale as ashes, his eyes sunken, misery and anxiety so deeply written on his countenance, that Gerard exclaimed in horror.

There was yet more than two hours to wait before the night train to Crofton. Vivian took his friend to the Club to get

some dinner, and, meantime, detailed Angela's symptoms, as far as he knew them, almost imploring the Frenchman to save her.

"*Je ferai mon possible,*" was the answer. "You love this *demoiselle*, then, Vivian?"

"She is my brother's *fiancée*," replied Vivian, a flush mounting to his brow.

"Ah, *grand Dieu!*" said Gerard, with a quick glance at him; "that is why you have been so pale, so sad, my poor friend?"

"Well, yes, I love her," broke in Vivian impetuously, "why should I deny it? Gerard, for the love of God, save her! and let me have news, full, particular news, day by day. You will keep my

secret, I know ; you comprehend, honour has placed a gulf between us. My brother must not guess at what I have told you. I keep away, because I know I should betray myself if he saw me!"

"*Je le crois bien,*" said Gerard, with emphasis. "If you would have your secret your own, do not let them see you. Well, I will do my best, if only for your sake, *mon vieux*. Courage, courage, we shall win yet! It is a duel between fever and science, and we have youth on our side."

Dr Gerard was a small, black-bearded, bright-eyed man, with a quiet cold manner, a sweet smile, and a gentle voice. He was one of Vivian's dearest friends, and loved and admired him deeply.

"Poor Vivian!" he thought, as the night train sped down to Crofton. "Poor Vivian, with a heart large and deep as the ocean, with a mind keen and powerful as the sword of Roland; with the manners of a marquis of the *ancien régime*, and the opinions of a lover of freedom and humanity;—a man of science, a poet, a traveller—brave as a lion, tender as a woman,—and all his life to be darkened for the sake of a *petite demoiselle*, who has chosen that big handsome Englishman who loves nothing but *le sport*. It is a curious thing!"

The train whizzed on through the dark night, and by and by came Crofton station, and a carriage waiting to take the "foreign gentleman" to the Hall.

When he arrived there, though it was three o'clock in the morning, Mr Willoughby and Captain Vane came to the door and welcomed him, saying that Dr Lamb was with the sick girl, and did not expect her to live till the morning. Harry's face was drawn with misery. Tears were in Mr Willoughby's eyes and rolling unheeded down his cheeks. Both men greeted the French doctor almost as they might have done some strong angel of help.

"Will you see the doctor?" said Harry.

"No, the patient first, if you please, and the doctor permits," said Gerard; "I like to judge for myself without any prejudice."

Dr Lamb was called down and assented willingly to this plan, and then Gerard was conducted to the sick-room.

Through the large hall, up the great staircase, down a long gallery, and here was the room where life and death were wrestling terribly. Two people were there, the sick-nurse, and a young girl with a pale face, in a long blue dressing gown. On the bed lay poor Angela, her eyes glazed, her skin burning, babbling to herself low unconscious words, interrupted by moans, and sometimes, a loud exclamation or cry.

"I wish to be quite alone with the patient and the nurse," said the doctor.

"Come, Frank darling," said her father; "come, Harry, my boy, come with me."

He took Frank by the hand, and led her into the next room, where there was a fire and lights. There the three waited, waited — counting the moments and the beating of their own hearts. Frank fell on her knees, and burying her face in her hands, prayed; Harry sat with his eyes fixed on the door; Mr Willoughby paced softly up and down.

Merciful heaven! how long the examination lasted! There must, there must be hope! Impossible that now the doctor could come and give a fatal verdict! A door softly opened, and Gerard was among them. Harry grasped him by the arm, and looked into his face with agony, his tongue refused to speak.

"Calm yourself," said Gerard, "my friend, *du courage*, there is still hope. Take me to the doctor, Lamb do you call him? I must see him now; and you, monsieur, will you have some champagne brought up here at once, and some good old cognac. Mademoiselle, will you command some essence of beef to be made immediately?"

What a comfort it was to *do* something; what strength and hope Gerard's quiet, cheerful manner had given them. All three separated to get ready what he had asked for. Then came a short consultation with Dr Lamb, and then the opinion was given,—she was dying now of exhaustion; strength must be kept up at any price; if she could be made to swallow

and keep down enough stimulants and nourishment, there was hope.

It was the cold turn of the night, four o'clock A.M. Gerard well knew what so many doctors and nurses neglect, that the greatest care must be taken to watch the course of a fever; during the hot fit, light covering in, cool drinks, fresh air, however cold it be,—then *immediately* the turn comes, every attention to keep in warmth.

The fever was now leaving Angela, and utter exhaustion and chill would certainly supervene. If that could be successfully combated life was saved for the time, if not death would be the result. Like a skilful general, who has his reserved forces ready to bring up to any weak point, Gerard made

every preparation, and waited his time. He held Angela's hand in his, and soon his delicate touch told him the skin was less burning, the pulse, though still too rapid to count, beating with less violence. Now was the time. Wine, brandy, the juice of meat, were administered, cautiously and carefully. To the eyes of the ignorant Gerard seemed only to be feeding the fever, even the nurse stood aghast, but he knew what he was about, and the result proved his wisdom. It was a hard to hand fight for hours, but by ten o'clock Angela was pronounced out of immediate danger, and Dr Gerard, after taking some breakfast, went to his well-earned rest.

"God be praised!" exclaimed Mr Wil-

loughby, "that little Frenchman deserves a kingdom. Go and rest, Harry, my boy, you look worn to death. I hope Frank's asleep."

For the next week Gerard scarcely left Angela's bedside. Day by day as it went by brought little change: violent returns of the fever, then exhaustion, then again the fever. Sometimes there seemed little hope, then would come some more favourable symptom, — Gerard saw everything, neglected no minutest precaution, fought his way steadily inch by inch, and at last the life ebbed back, she was saved.

Still there was always danger of a relapse, and the weakness was very great, Gerard must not leave Crofton yet. But the days

went by, and strength came slowly back by imperceptible degrees. The clouded consciousness gradually cleared, the large dark eyes regained their human meaning ; Angela had now a gently murmured word, a faint hand clasp, for the loving watchers who stood by her pillow ; though still very, very ill, she was on the road to recovery. She lay in that sick-room helpless and weak as a new-born babe, in pain and discomfort, but gently patient, and loving, and *safe*.

Poor Angela ! It was strange to feel her hand so heavy that to lift it was like moving some mighty weight, while, all the time, it looked so thin, and small, and fragile, that a feather might outbalance it. It was odd, and by no means pleasant,

to feel all pain and ache, yet not able to move in bed; what a curious buzzing noise was in her ears, like the sound of the air in a sea-shell!

She watched with languid attention the pattern of the paper on the walls, the flickering firelight, and the quiet moving figures. It was her world now; she clung to these kind nurses like some little child to its mother, or some shipwrecked seaman to a rock.

The gentle, composed doctor, her dear uncle, Frank, so ready and loving, Harry who looked at her with the eyes of a man whose darling has been brought back to him from the jaws of death.

Other recollections were dimly struggling in Angela's mind, but far off and indistinct.

There was a strange hunger in her for something or somebody, a strange terror of some remembered and dreaded pain, but she would not think of that, even if she could.

Every day both Frank and Gerard wrote to Vivian, the latter giving his friend a full and particular account of every measure taken, of every change and turn. Vivian had asked the Frenchman to tell him if Angela ever, while unconscious, mentioned his name, and to this an answer in the negative was returned.

"She talks much," Gerard wrote, "in Italian of her father, of Italy, of the convent, saying often the names of nuns, and speaking then in French. Then she repeats

aloud lessons, French grammar, *analyse*—the convent teaching apparently; so it goes on. I have not heard her say your name or anything about you that *I* could comprehend.”

But, though Gerard was right in saying that Angela's delirium had mostly carried her back to the old days of childhood and school life, Frank had once or twice heard a murmured word that spoke of Vivian.

“My darling, must you leave me? will you never come again?” This would be in a scarcely audible whisper. Then again would come the French, the lessons, and the convent life.

Frank wondered if Harry had ever heard words like these from Angela's lips, and if

so, whether he had put a true interpretation on them. Now that Angela was no longer in imminent danger, poor Frank's own secret pain grew daily heavier and harder to bear.

Mrs Willoughby had been, both for Angela's sake and her own, forbidden the sick-room, but there was one visitor that obtained access there. From the moment she had first heard of Angela's illness, Mrs Bosanquet had walked over every day to inquire for her, bringing flowers and fruit and begging to be of use.

One day, after the fever had somewhat abated, the little lady succeeded in coaxing Dr Gerard to admit her to the sick-room. Her presence there was found to be a positive refresh-

ment. She had the sense of beauty Angela always craved for, and could alter the look of the room into something fresh and pleasant just by a few deft touches, besides making a perfect picture herself with her piquante dress and pretty attitudes. She had a sweet soft voice too, for reading aloud, and soothed and charmed Angela with the exquisite verse of the "Empty Singer of an Idle Day." She seemed really to have fallen in love with the sick girl, who for her part soon became very fond of the bright caressing face and voice.

So time went on, and at last, with the first bright days of spring Gerard returned to Paris, overwhelmed with thanks, and with a fee that made him feel him-

self a rich man. He had left orders that as soon as Angela's strength would allow of it, she was to go to the seaside for change of air, and before very long she was taken down to the Isle of Wight, with her cousin as a companion and old Nurse to look after them both.

On his way through London the French doctor had seen Vivian, and was so shocked by his friend's ghastly appearance, that he exclaimed in dismay, "*Dieu de Dieu!* Vivian, you will be ill yourself if you do not take care! Leave this horrible dirty smoky town, and go and travel. She is well now, at least she will be well, and if she be not for you, forget her, my friend!"

Vivian shook his head sadly, but now

that he was no longer under the iron of cruel anxiety, he did not feel the impulse towards confidence, and avoided any further discussion of his feelings. One part of his friend's advice he determined to follow without further delay. He had now no longer any excuse for lingering in England. His ostensible one — the publication of his book — would avail him no further, and, as Angela was now convalescent and would soon be well, it was better both for himself and for her that he should go away out of reach and hearing of her. If only he could avoid all mention of her marriage! With this idea uppermost in his mind, he hired a yacht and set off on a cruise to the Mediterranean, determining to

not with the soft blue heaven and the floating clouds, the tender green of the budding trees, the lark singing and soaring in the ether, the thrushes and black-birds piping and whistling in the garden, the flashing, silver-winged gulls, or the gay, distant voices of the children on the beach; she could think of nothing but a dreaded moment that was before her.

That afternoon Harry was coming down, and she could no longer delay to tell him the whole plain truth, that she did not love him as a woman should love her husband, that she would never be his wife.

On that terrible night of mad love and jealousy, when a lightning flash had shown

her how wrong and mistaken had been her notion of self-sacrifice, or rather the notion Vivian had imposed on her, Angela had firmly decided to confess to Harry the honest truth, and beg him to release her from her engagement. But then had come her illness, and for weeks she had lain between life and death, nearly the whole time in the raving of delirium, or the stupor of unconsciousness, in her few conscious moments, weak, helpless, forgetful of all but present physical pain. Then, gradually, life had ebbed back, her mind had unclouded, and she had found Harry watching beside her, tender as a mother with a sick baby, full of joy at her safety. It seemed impossible to plunge a knife into his heart at such a time.

And yet, every day that she left him in ignorance would make the awakening more cruel.

Several times she tried to approach the subject, but she was so very weak, a curious buzzing would come in her ears, her heart would beat violently, and either headache and fever, or deadly faintness would force her to relinquish the attempt. So ill did the very thought of what it would be to tell him make her, that the doctors soon found out that she was always much worse after having seen her betrothed, and begged him not to talk to her, to stay with her only for a few minutes at a time, and not to seek *tête-à-tête* conversations till Angela was really getting well.

Harry was rather hurt, for during the time of Angela's danger, and for the first few days after her consciousness had returned, he had been accustomed to be with her a great deal, his nursing-powers had been found to be of value, and she had seemed to like to have him near her. He tried to think, as Mr Willoughby suggested, that it was because Angela cared for his society too much that it had the effect of exciting her; but his own inmost heart, and old Lady Treherne's raven warning, spoke in the negative. Still he could not really fear. She was his own,—come back to him from the very gates of Death. She seemed more than ever his own, now that he had wrestled with the dread Angel for her, and still had her safe.

After those terrible nights when he had watched her dying, as he thought, after those hours of agonising hope in which he had waited in her room, not even able to approach her pillow, for Gerard would allow no unnecessary attendance, but just ready to go on any little message, do any trifling service, and at least hear from minute to minute that the slender thread of life was yet unbroken, after all that bewildering succession of anxiety, fear, despair, and hope, his love for her seemed to have grown into new strength and fashion. He loved her as Martha and Mary might have loved Lazarus, come back to them from the Shadow-land.

Yes, of course she was his own ; he was a

fool to doubt and fear, and he must be very patient, very tender, not even with the softest breath blow on that slender taper-light, lest it should leave him in darkness. Therefore, though he brought Angela flowers every day, and spent much time with her at different intervals, he was careful to avoid long conversations, and to make some excuse to leave her if ever he saw her looking agitated.

So it had happened that Angela had gone away to the sea, and still Harry remained in ignorance of what she had to tell him.

She and Frank had been at Freshwater for three weeks now, and, though Angela was convalescent, she did not gain strength at all rapidly. The dread of her secret

preyed on her mind, and, too, the old pain and longing for Vivian had come back stronger than ever.

She would sit propped up with pillows by her window, and gaze at the foam-crests far out at sea, and feel as if somehow her soul were there, tossing about on the billows. Or sometimes, in the quiet evenings, she would see a little boat, gently rocking up and down on the waves, in the light of the rosy sky and the opal sea, and a passionate longing would fill her that she could just step into that boat with *him*, and sail away, away, away into eternity.

Once or twice she had tried to write to Harry, but she still felt too weak, and besides, she could tell him more tenderly

than she could write. Painful, terrible though it would be to speak, she must at least do all she could to soften the blow.

At last the time had come when it must be given. Harry had written to say he was coming down to see her, and every minute she was expecting him.

There was a strong, firm tread scrunching the gravel of the little garden path, then a man's foot on the stairs, and then the door opened, and Captain Vane entered.

Angela was sitting in a large arm-chair by the window, supported by pillows. She wore a white, floating wrapper; on a little table near her were some grapes, and a basket of wild spring flowers. Her thin,

pale, soft, beautiful face and great dark eyes seemed strangely spiritual, and there was, in her languid attitude, and in all her presence, a mixture of the touching helplessness of a child, and the dignity of a woman.

"My poor pet!" said Captain Vane, after his first greeting, "you look very ill; I hoped to have found you better.

"Oh, I am much better," said Angela, with a faint smile, "I am enjoying this delicious air and lovely view. You have no idea what it is after having been ill."

Harry scarcely listened to her words, he was so much distressed to see how flush and pallor rapidly succeeded each other on the girl's cheek, and her slender transparent

fingers twined themselves nervously together. There was something distressed too in her face. Perhaps that expression vaguely alarmed him, perhaps he only hoped to chase it by words of love, but after a little he began to talk about the time of their marriage.

Angela turned pale as the white wave crests.

"Don't, Harry," she' said in a hoarse, broken tone.

"Don't what, my darling?" said Harry; "don't speak of our marriage? We are going to be married soon, very soon, I hope. You are going to be my wife. You *are*, Angela? What do you mean?" Angela was speechless, something had risen in her throat and choked her, but there was a look

in her eyes which gave Harry a sudden terror.

“What do you mean?” he said; “you do love me? don’t you love me? O my God! is it possible? Speak, speak, don’t you love me?”

Angela gasped, and seemed almost as though she were fainting.

In a minute Harry was kneeling beside her.

“There, there,” he said, tenderly, “my pet, don’t bother yourself; you do love me, don’t you? I know you do; never mind me; I *know* you love me a little.” There was still a tone of pleading question in his voice.

Angela gathered all her strength. “Harry,” she said, “I must tell you, I have

been very wrong not to tell you before, I don't love you as you would wish me to. You wouldn't marry me if you could see my heart."

Harry's sunburnt cheek was almost as pale as her own. "I have thought as much, at times," he said, in a low voice, wherein emotion seemed kept down by force. "I have thought as much. You don't love me."

"O Harry, forgive me, forgive me!" said Angela, big tears rolling down her cheeks. "I do love you very, very dearly, but not,—not,—*not*," she said, in a broken, suffocated voice, "not as a wife should love her husband."

"Not as you love some other man, I suppose you mean," said Harry, in the same

low, hard voice. "Do you love any one else?"

"Yes," whispered Angela.

"And you mean to throw me over and marry him?"

"No, I shall never marry him, there is a great, deep gulf between us, but I can't marry any one else, I love him."

A terrible storm shook Harry. On one side were jealousy, anger, and passion,—but then how could he be wroth with this fragile, helpless child, and now was the time to show the truth of his love.

Generosity and unselfish tenderness conquered. After a minute's silence, he said—

"Well, God bless you, I am not

worthy of your love; so be it! You are right to choose some one more fit for you."

"O Harry!" said Angela, passionately, "it is not that! You are far, far better than I am; it is that I *can't help* loving him. I ought to have told you long ago. O Harry, forgive me!"

"I have nothing to forgive," he replied, with a touching dignity. "I only want and pray that you may be happy."

"That I shall never be," said Angela; "I shall never marry any one,—probably never see him again,—but I could not be your wife. I shall never—I shall never—never"——her voice again suffocated, she *felt* her lips grow white, the floor seemed

to rise up under her, the sound of the sea was in her ears, she stretched out her hands in a vague helplessness, and then fell back in her chair. She had fainted dead away. Harry lifted her in his arms and carried her to the bed, calling loudly for assistance. Frank and Nurse were soon there, and he went downstairs to the drawing-room.

He felt stunned. At first he could think of little but this fainting fit of Angela's. She was some time in coming round, and he went up again and stood at the bedroom door, and finally walked off and got the doctor. That was *doing* something and thought was suspended. But, on his return, he heard that Angela had recovered, and relieved from that

anxiety he went out and down to the sea. There were the chalk cliffs, the glittering, distant sails, the wheeling gulls, the boats drawn up on the beach, the nets spread out to dry, the smell of tar, the odour of the sea-breeze, the gay and innocent laughing and shouting voices of children — fishermen's ragged urchins, or children of higher degree, dabbling with bare feet in the salt water or building castles of sand.

He, too, had built his castle of sand, and the waves had come up and washed it away! Mechanically he watched the children at their play, and listened to the sad murmur of the sea, as the waves of the rising tide broke on the beach. The sea is like a great cup filled with all

the salt tears of Humanity, all voices of sorrow, sighing, and pain are mingled in its sound.

Evening came on, he heard the children say it was "time to go home." He had no home now, no home for his heart at least—that had been broken off rudely from its anchor hold. He had no *one* now to belong to him, for whom he could care more than for all the world beside, on whom he could spend all his love and devotion. He was quite alone. He had no place to turn to, no hope and duty, his life seemed uprooted.

What should he do now at this moment? he had no longer any right to go to her, nurse her, tend her; he was

no closer to her now than any ordinary friend; why should he go back to the cottage at all? No, he would send a message to Frank, and go straight off up to town by the next train. It would be easier to bear his trouble in London amidst the noise and confusion of men, and in some states of mind London seems like the vortex of a whirlpool towards which one is inevitably sucked. Back to the great Babylon therefore went poor Harry, and there let us leave him.

CHAPTER IX.

"Consider well, the voice replied,
His face that two hours since has died :
Wilt thou find passion, pain, or pride ?
His palms are folded on his breast,
There is no other thing expressed
But long disquiet merged in rest."

TENNYSON.

"As when two men have loved a woman well."

D. G. ROSSETTI.

It was now the month of August, and Angela, quite strong and well again, was abroad with Mr and Mrs Bosanquet.

Harry was living down his disappointment, and, to tell the truth, was somewhat surprised that it did not weigh upon him more

heavily. Not that his heart did not often ache, but it was more from the void left in it by the loss of his own love, than the longing for Angela herself. He had loved her dearly, but she was not part of his life and soul, and therefore absence, and his own determination not to think of her, helped him much to conquer his trouble, and to render Angela's image dim and indistinct in his mind.

It was very different with Vivian. Ever since the spring he had been cruising about the Mediterranean, travelling in Sicily and Greece, and spending his time shooting, sketching, sailing the yacht, writing poetry, and—thinking about Angela. All his endeavours to forget her seemed absolutely useless, for in these beautiful scenes, and

away from the cares and distractions of everyday life, the thought of her was constantly with him, he longed for her at times with a passionate intensity that wrung his heart, and life without her seemed to him a hideous desert.

He had wished to be alone for a little in the peace of Nature, to lose, if possible, the sense of his own identity,—and above all to avoid hearing of his brother's marriage, which must of course have taken place by this time. He had therefore shunned civilisation, had consorted entirely with fishermen and peasants, and had given no address where letters could reach him, and thus had heard nothing of all that had taken place since he had left England.

One day, however, some trifling circumstance made it necessary for him to go to Palermo, and while in the hotel there, as he was turning over the leaves of *Galig-nani*, he was terribly shocked by the following paragraph :—

“We regret to state that Sir Richard Vane, Bart., of St Michael’s Court, Devon, is dangerously ill, and is not expected to recover.”

The blood seemed to rush from Vivian’s heart. He had seen little of his father for many years, and seemed to have nothing in common with him ; but it is only when sickness and danger attack our near relations that we can gauge the real affection we

have for them, in spite of the want of sympathy that may have alienated them from us.

A muttered exclamation of wrath broke from his lips at his own "selfish folly," as he called it, in having put himself out of the way of communications from home, and a great rush of tenderness flooded all his recollections of his father. He reproached himself bitterly for past disagreements which, seen now by this soft halo of memory, seemed to have been principally his own fault, and scenes of his childhood crowded upon his mind, when he, a curly-headed little fellow, used to ride by Sir Richard's side over the stubble, or round the Home Farm.

His father had been proud and fond

enough then of his little heir, why had he not known how to keep that affection? In his present mood Vivian was ready to take all the blame of the estrangement, and longed with heart-sick intensity for the opportunity of making all very different. If only he were not too late!

While all these feelings were torturing his warm heart, his brain was mechanically calculating times and routes, and, after a little study of "Bradshaw," he telegraphed to his mother that he would be in England on a particular date, the quickest time in which he could accomplish the journey.

Then a curious and painful wonder crossed his mind. Should he meet Angela as Harry's wife? It seemed too horrible,

too ridiculous to be possible, and yet there was every probability that he might do so. The marriage must have taken place by this time, and Harry would, no doubt, be at St Michael's with his wife. Poor Vivian! he had not very pleasant subjects for thought during his long railway journey. Five days of rapid travel brought him to Deep-pool, the nearest station to St Michael's Court, and descending from the train, he received a grave welcome from the station-master, which told him only too plainly what news he had to expect.

"How are you, Wallington?" said Vivian.

"What news from St Michael's?"

"Haven't you heard, sir?"

Vivian shook his head.

"Sir Richard died yesterday morning."

"Then I'm too late!" said Vivian, turning abruptly away and walking a few steps down the platform. Too late! not only to make up for the faults of the past, but even for a word of kindness and forgiveness from his father's lips.

As with the instinct of an Englishman he was trying to choke down his emotion, he heard the station-master direct a porter to "take Sir Vivian's luggage to the pony cart," and the title made him realise with a deeper shock that all was over.

He had twelve miles to drive to St Michael's, and a lovely drive it was. Vivian was not much in the mood to think of scenery, yet he could not help noting the freshness, variety, and peacefulness of

the landscape, and, several times as he passed well-known spots, his heart leaped up with the delight of the wanderer coming home. Every turn though reminded him more of his boyhood and his father, and when he spoke at last (he had only silently acknowledged the old groom's greeting), it was to ask for particulars of Sir Richard's illness and death.

"Of course, Captain Vane is at home," he said, after he had learnt the details.

"Oh yes, sir, he's been at the Court more than *tu* weeks."

"Is he,—is he married?"

"Married? oh no, sir," said the groom with an accent of utter amazement.

"I haven't heard any news, you see, Groves, but what I saw in the paper."

"Lord bless you, no, sir, the Captain ain't married. He told me to tell you he would have met you, sir, but my lady doesn't like him to leave her."

"Very well," and Vivian relapsed into silence and his own sad thoughts.

The road was a very hilly one, up and down, past quaint farmhouses with overhanging eaves, nestled in among orchards, where the red, green, and golden apples shone through the leaves. Past villages, where the cottages with their thatched roofs and latticed windows stood at all kinds of angles to the street, each one with its porch covered with myrtle, and clematis, and its little garden gay with

hydrangeas, fuchsias, sweet-williams, and hollyhocks. Past fields of yellow corn where the reapers were busy; past the dark woods out of which the young pheasants ran across the road; down into deep lanes, the hedges one tangled mass of honeysuckle, bramble, and the bindweed with its graceful trailers and pure white flowers. Then up over a bit of moorland, gorgeous with the purple and yellow of heather and gorse, down on the other side, and, leaving St Michael's village nestled in among the hills to the right, the road turned up a steep incline, and there was the park paling and the lodge gate of St Michael's Court.

The yellow afternoon sunbeams were

flickering on the soft turf of the park, and the groups of magnificent trees beneath which stood cattle and graceful deer. The road went down with another dip, and then, turning a corner, you came full in view of the Court standing up above you, a fine castellated building of grey stone, with, in front, an Italian garden, brilliant with scarlet geraniums, descending in terraces to the park, and up above behind, woods reaching up the hill, and surmounted by the great purple shoulder of Exmoor.

Captain Vane met his brother at the door, and the two men silently grasped each other's hands with a strong clinging pressure.

"Thank God, you've come!" said Harry,

after a minute; "I scarcely thought you could be here so soon."

"But I'm too late," replied Vivian, the tears starting to his eyes; "I never thought not to see my father again!"

"He wasn't conscious for the last few days, but he spoke of you before and sent his love to you."

Vivian again turned and walked a few steps away, then in a broken voice he asked, "How is my mother?"

"Oh, in an awful state. She can neither eat nor sleep. I daresay you will be able to soothe her. She has been longing so for you to come."

"Go up to her, Harry, and tell her I am here; I will follow you in a minute when she is prepared to see me."

Vivian waited at the door of Lady Vane's darkened room while his brother went in to announce his arrival, then he softly entered, and mother and son were left alone with their grief.

Vivian had always been his mother's favourite son, and the burst of tears with which ~~she~~ welcomed him, was more natural and soothing than any form yet taken by her trouble.

Before the evening was over he had, by a mixture of gentle coaxing and authority, made her eat some of the dinner he took up to her with his own hands; he had opened the window and let the soft breath of the August evening into the close, dark room, and had pointed out the exquisite beauty of the sunset sky as he

softly repeated the two last chapters of the Revelation of St John, and finally, he succeeded in persuading her to go to bed, sitting beside her, and holding her hands in his, until utter exhaustion and the soothing comfort of his presence made her fall asleep.

The two brothers dined together, but spoke little during their meal, and the name of Angela was not once mentioned between them, though Vivian was longing to hear it.

Afterwards Vivian went into the chapel, where, according to the family custom, Sir Richard's body was lying. The twilight had gathered by this time, and the chapel was dark, save for the tall wax tapers burning round the coffin. Vivian stood for a long

time gazing at the pale set face with its sharpened features. Never again would that face soften in kindness to him, never again would that cold heart feel one throb, and his own was surging with such a tempest of emotions. "Forgive me, father,—forgive me, father!" he said aloud to the still form that neither answered nor heard, then, with a sudden impulse, he threw himself down on the stone floor, and prayed with a passionate sob for strength, and light, and faith, vowing within himself to do his best in the responsible position that was now his. Then rising, he kissed his father's cold lips and hand, and went out on to the terrace of the Italian garden.

Harry was pacing up and down there

smoking his cigar, and the two brothers sat down on a seat at one end of the long paved walk, and remained in silence for some minutes.

The full harvest moon was rising from behind the dark distant woods, and her light shone with a soft yellow glow. All along the low stone wall of the terrace stood marble vases of hydrangeas and orange trees, alternating with statues and fountains. Down below in the valley might be seen the lights of the village, and the winding river shining in the moonlight like a silver ribbon. Vivian drew a long deep breath; the peace and beauty seemed to be sinking into his heart.

"Are you very tired?" asked Harry.

"A little; I've been travelling so fast,

you see. Harry, when is the Squire coming down?"

"To-morrow."

"How are they all at Crofton?"

"Very well, I believe."

"And when are you going to be married?"

At last Vivian had approached the question which had been trembling on his lips all the evening.

"*What?*" said Harry, taking the cigar from between his lips and turning towards his brother. "Don't you——? No,—of course you don't. When am I going to be married? *Never!*"

"What!" said Vivian, in his turn. "What do you mean? *Never?*"

"Well, I mean that I have no prospects
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of the kind at present," answered Harry, with a short, hard laugh.

"What do you mean?" said Vivian again, in a hoarse, choked voice.

"Only that I've received my *congé*," said Harry, in the same defiant tone; "I'm a free man, at anybody's service. That's the way with women; they squeeze your heart dry like an orange, and then throw it away. Curse!—no—God bless her! She was quite right; she didn't love me, and she told me so."

Vivian felt stunned; he caught hold of his brother's arm as if for support, everything seemed going round.

"Do you mean the engagement is broken off?" he said, in a strange voice.
"Why?"

"Because she did not love me, and she does love some other man," said Harry.

Possessed by some sudden impulse which was the child of instinct not reflection, Vivian rose suddenly from his seat, and standing before his brother, said, "I had better tell you the truth. She loves me, and I love her!"

There was a minute's silence, broken only by the deep breath of the two men and the tinkling splash of a fountain. The scene was intensely peaceful in that pure silver moonlight. The spray of the fountain sparkled like diamonds, the statues gleamed white and cold; the scent of the orange blossoms was heavy in the air; a bat wheeled noiselessly round

Vivian's head; the trees looked dark and still as though cast in bronze. But the two human hearts were throbbing with passionate unrest. Harry was the first to speak.

"So *you* were the one to take her from me?" he said, in a low voice.

"It is as bitter to me as it is to you," said Vivian, passionately. "Harry, if it would give you the slightest satisfaction to shoot me, I'm perfectly ready."

"I daresay!" said Harry, with a grim laugh, "that would mend matters, wouldn't it? May I ask, was it deliberately that you won from me the love of the only girl I ever cared for?"

Vivian did not answer; of what use was it to defend himself from the bitter imputa-

tion? He might as well take his punishment now, as he had done his floggings when he was a schoolboy, stoutly and in silence.

Perhaps Harry was a little softened by the look of the white set face, he spoke presently in rather a different tone.

"I think you might as well have told me this before. Do you suppose I wanted to marry a woman who was in love with another man? She was perfectly right to break off the engagement; it's only a pity she did not do so at once."

"It is," said Vivian, speaking in short, choked sentences; "but it was all my fault,—I thought she might forget in time,—I put on the poor child a burden which almost killed her.—I was wrong."

—You should have been told the truth at once.”

He could scarcely speak, his heart was yearning towards his brother.

“And you love her?” said Harry.

“Yes, I love her,” he answered, impetuously. “Whom God has joined — Harry, she is mine—give her to me!”

“She’s not mine to give,” said Harry, with another hard laugh. “I can’t imitate the *generosity* with which you gave her to me. After you had won her love, why, in God’s name, hadn’t you the honesty to tell me so?”

“I was wrong,” repeated Vivian; “Harry, forgive me for that, and for—*all*.”

There was a silence. “Harry,” said.

Vivian, "my own brother, if you knew what I have suffered, what a hell my life has been"—

He stopped short. How could he express all that was in his heart—the bitter misery that he had felt at having been the one to stab his brother—the fruitless struggles he had made? He felt such a coward at even hinting at his own pain to the man who had lost her, and yet could he say nothing to win his brother's forgiveness?

"Well, we won't speak of that," he began again, "I deserved it all."

Meantime a crowd of conflicting feelings were surging in Harry's breast. For the moment jealousy and anger had revived the pain of his love for Angela, and yet, uncon-

sciously to himself, it was a very different feeling to that of even two months ago. Absence and all other circumstances of time are powerless to affect *love* in its highest and truest sense.

“Love strikes one hour—LOVE ! those *never* loved
Who dream that they loved ONCE.”

But this does not apply to the thousand mixtures of passion, affection, and gratified vanity, which we also call *love*, and which the test of absence chills and alters ; and, too, Harry's love for Angela had received a mortal blow on the day she had told him she loved another man. Besides, his tender heart was touched by the misery he read in his brother's face, and heard in the tones of his voice.

Angela had never really loved him, why should he grudge her love to Vivian? And, after all, this was his brother, who had always been so dear to him, and now, when the dead body of their father lay in the house near by, when a hundred awakened memories of childhood and boyhood had been drawing his heart to Vivian even closer than of old, the brotherly affection seemed a stronger and more living passion than the ghost of his dead love.

"I am not going to quarrel with you, Vivian," he said, "for the sake of any woman. She didn't love me, and she told me so. All right—that was my affair! You love her—that is yours!"

"God bless you, Harry!" said Vivian, in

an excited tone. A rush of passionate affection for his brother seemed to fill his heart.

The broad bright moon hung in the purple sky, and all the landscape was bathed in her intense white light. The whole air and earth seemed full of love and peace, and the brothers who had appeared on the verge of such a terrible disunion, were closer and dearer to each other than when they had knelt as tiny children at their mother's knee.

CHAPTER X.

“A deep
And speechless swoon of joy, as might befall
Two disunited spirits, when they leap
In union from this earth's obscure and fading sleep.”

SHELLEY.

FOR the next few weeks the two brothers found much to draw them together, not only in their mutual sorrow and in their tenderness for their mother, but in making plans for improving the estate and the condition of the people living on it. Vivian had always vowed that if ever the property

came into his hands, he would at once rebuild almost every cottage upon it. All his efforts in time past had been in vain to induce his father to build respectable labourers' cottages instead of the tumble-down tenements, where fathers and mothers, grown-up sons and daughters, were huddled together without regard to comfort or decency. Equally in vain were his petitions for new schools and a more enlightened course of teaching.

Sir Richard had been not only niggardly, but was a Tory of the good old stamp, hating the modern education cry, and the only result of Vivian's arguments had been a bitter disagreement between father and son, wherein Vivian sneered, and Sir Richard stormed and bullied.

Now Vivian was master, and as usual, he discovered that it was easier to theorize than to practise. New cottages must and should be built at once, but how could these wretched farm-labourers—demoralized as they had been by years of oppression and grinding want—be taught to live in cleanliness, independence, and self-respect ?

All kinds of plans for thinning the labour-market, and thus raising the standard of wages, fermented in his mind, and enough of them leaked out to astonish Mr Willoughby (then staying at the Court), who declared that “Vivian’s head was more full of maggots than ever !”

Harry, however, was ready to talk over all these plans, besides being very kind in

giving his help in the countless details of business. He learnt much from Vivian's larger mind that had never before come within the sphere of his own philosophy, and the two brothers had seldom felt more in common.

Vivian did not write to Angela. As soon as the more pressing part of his business was over, he would himself go to Switzerland, where she then was, and if she still loved him, he would claim her as his promised wife. He scarcely dared to think of what it would be to have her for his own, but the hope gave him wings to surmount all cares, and an almost super-human power of rapid thought and work.

There was a good deal to be done. New

plans to be looked at, tenement leases to be examined, accounts to be gone over, innumerable letters to be written, and never-ending consultations with lawyers, architects, stone-masons, farmers, and the new agent. At last, however, Vivian felt himself free to go where his heart called him, and set off to Switzerland.

Meanwhile Angela and Mrs Bosanquet were staying at a little chalet-like hotel, high up among the mountains. Mr Bosanquet had gone to Vienna, and, as his wife was certainly not only happier but more agreeable in his absence, the two ladies were enjoying themselves in a quiet way.

Mrs Bosanquet was a charming com-

panion, sweet and unclouded as a summer day, full of a thousand nameless fascinations, and Angela would have been very happy with her, and in this glorious mountain scenery, if it had not been for the dull ache and the ceaseless craving that never left her heart.

One beautiful afternoon Mrs Bosanquet, tired with a morning's scramble, was lying on her bed reading a novel. Angela had gone out, and wandered towards a favourite spot about half a mile from the hotel, where she sat down on the grass to rest.

What a wonderful scene it was! Close by where Angela sat a silver-sheeted torrent thundered down, from the clouds—as it seemed—and tumbled down, down,

from rock to rock, into the ravine far below. All around were other cascades suspended over the cliff, some like a tiny thread of silver, others a delicate misty veil. Those of them that were at a distance had no audible sound or apparent motion; they drooped over the rocks as a pennon hangs when the wind is still. But the torrent beside which Angela sat, roared with an incessant thunder, a music, monotonous, yet never quite the same. No other sound broke the silence but the tinkling of the bells on the cows and goats, as, climbing the mountain-sides, they cropped the sweet short herbage. These silver-toned chimes mingled in harmony in the crystal clearness of the air, and sounded like a distant carillon. Behind

her stretched the "*alp*" or upland pasture, smooth, rounded, flower-enamelled hillocks of green, then a wall of rock, then a steeply sloping meadow up which the nimble goats still climbed, then more rocks, and above, grey granite peaks, in the rifts and crevices of which lay streaks of dazzling ice. On her right hand side the cataract fell over a precipice, and roared dizzily down into an abyss of incalculable depth. To the left, some hundred feet below, was a mountain tarn, darkly blue as the gentian flowers, the cliffs that overhung it mirrored on its surface in opaque purple shadows. Before her was a sight which the tongue of men nor of angels can describe;—a deep valley filled with a haze which varied

in colour from the purest amethyst to the deepest ultramarine, and beyond that the giant mountains;—dark pines climbing their sides in serried ranks, threads of white marking their foaming torrents, snowy clouds and mist wreaths floating about them, and up, far above the clouds, up in the blue vault of heaven, sharp, naked needles of dark rocks, like the tracery of Gothic architecture, and rounded summits covered with stainless and eternal snows. Lonely, silent, serene stand these cathedrals of the earth in their mantles of shining snow, like nothing but that vision seen of old by John the Divine—“And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, before whose face the heavens and earth fled away and were afraid.”

At that very time, as Angela was looking at this glorious view, Vivian had arrived at the little '*Alpenrosen Hof*,' having left Lucerne very early in the morning, and travelled as rapidly as possible to the place where he expected to find Angela. In spite of the grandeur and beauty of the scenery he had come through, he thought but little of it, so eager was he to get to his journey's end, and now he had reached it, and saw before him the long, low, chalet-like hotel, with its steep roof and carved balcony, a few solemn pines standing near it, the goats and cows feeding up to its door, and all around the snow-clad mountains.

The landlord ran out to the door to welcome him, rejoiced at the prospect of

another traveller, and stood smiling, bowing, and rubbing his hands, while Vivian asked for two ladies who were staying there—"Madame Bosanquet and another lady."

"*Fa, mein Herr, gewiss, oui, oui, Monsieur,*" replied the landlord, in an odd jargon of his own, "*vous voulez voir ces dames? Die weisse Engländerinnen wir nennen sie,—impossible de prononcer ces noms barbares,—je veux dire, difficiles. Par ici, Monsieur, par ici.*"

The landlord led the way, and Vivian followed, his heart beating fast and thick, his eyes seeming dazzled. At last he should see her, have her for his own; she whom he had longed for so passionately and hopelessly!

A door was opened, and he was shown into a room which he felt was empty, though a glance showed it to be redolent of her presence. The landlord withdrew, saying he would send the maid of Madame to inform her mistress that Monsieur was there, and for five minutes Vivian was left to his own reflections.

He *could* not think, and he was half angry with himself at finding that his heart was beating breathlessly, and that sparks seemed to fly before his eyes. With the hope of calming himself a little he examined the room, starting violently, however, at every approaching footstep. From the window could be seen a view of the Schwarzhorn, Silberhorn, Shreckhorn, Jungfrau, and other mighty mountains, floating in mid heaven

above their robe of clouds. The room was uncarpeted, wainscoted and floored with unpainted pine. Over the chimney-piece hung a picture of the *Mater Dolorosa*, which had been all wreathed round with stag's-horn moss; a bunch of wild-flowers stood before it. Pinned to the walls, and slanted up against them, were a number of water-colour sketches of mountain effects, signed "Angela Beatrice Willoughby;" on the table was a small heap of laces and ribbons, and close beside them a dainty work-basket. The window-curtains were of white muslin, the furniture covered with red velvet, which contrasted oddly with the uncarpeted floor. There was a small piano, and standing open on it Rossini's "*Masse Solemnelle*." A good many books were

lying about,—Milton, Byron, Shelley, George Sand's "Consuelo," a Bible, a Mass-book, some Tauchnitz novels, and a Bædeker. Vivian had time to note all this before the door opened, and a figure came rushing in. It was not Angela but Mrs Bosanquet, who almost ran up to him, both her hands outstretched.

"Mr Vane, how glad I am; how glad I am!"

Vivian was not only surprised, but abashed and confused, and not in the least knowing what to say, took and pressed Mrs Bosanquet's extended hand by way of answer.

"I never was so happy in all my life," went on Mrs Bosanquet. "You have come to her, I know you have come to her, now

it is all right!" Then, with a sudden comical change of expression, she said, "Dear me, perhaps, as usual, I have only been making an impulsive goose of myself after all! I *beg* your pardon!"

"You needn't," said Vivian, laughing, though flushed. "You are very kind; it is delightful not to have any explanations to make!" as he spoke he glanced at the door.

Mrs Bosanquet's eyes followed his. She arched her delicate eyebrows and laughed.

"No, she isn't coming; she is out by the big waterfall; you go and look for her, and I will go and make myself tidy. I couldn't even wait to dress myself when

I heard you were here," and she glanced at her floating white wrapper. "That is the way," she continued, interrupting the speech on Vivian's lips, and pointing out of the window, "round there, by the waterfall,—don't tumble into it; *au revoir!*" and she kissed her finger-tips, and disappeared from the room as quickly as she had come in.

Vivian, as may be supposed, did not lose much time in following her directions. This rapid little scene had given him back his self-possession, and he set off for the waterfall, his heart beating high but not painfully, and a feeling of triumph and joy in his mind.

The waterfall was further than it looked in that deceptively clear atmosphere, but

Vivian soon heard its thunder close by. Now he had a bit of scrambling over rocks and moss to do, then he turned round a sharp point of stone, and, immediately before him, stood Angela.

She was leaning against a high grey rock, the sun shining on her white dress and uncovered hair; at her feet the ground was blue with gentians, and all about were flaming pink masses of the Alpine rose. The dazzling foam of the waterfall was close beside her; on its other bank some black pines overhung the crags; in the very centre of the cascade was a jutting flat rock, and on this rock stood a tiny white kid, tall spikes of larkspur growing all round him. Angela was holding out

a bunch of wild flowers, and trying to coax the small creature to leap the torrent. For one instant Vivian stood and watched her, and the scene was for ever photographed upon his mind, though at the time he was not conscious of noting any detail. Thus for one moment he waited! And Angela?—What sudden impulse made her turn her head,—to see close beside her,—*Vivian!* Vivian, whose name she had spoken aloud to the waters not five minutes before!

Like a lightning flash their eyes met; the glances mixed and melted; no need was there for other language; he held out his arms and clasped her to his breast. How long did they stand thus? Was it years, centuries, or only minutes? Was

it his heart or hers that was beating so loud and fast with such strong mighty joy? Were they his tears or hers so hot and wet upon her cheeks? Like the thoughts of one single mind their souls flowed together. The mountains and the torrents, the tossing pines and lovely flowers, were less than nothing to them, faded, indistinct, forgotten,—in all the world was nothing but each other and their love.

For long hours that afternoon 'Vivian and Angela sat on the soft grass, holding each other's hands, with hearts that carolled like the lark when he springs up towards the sun. They scarcely spoke, words seemed useless; sometimes there was a short question asked or a word of ex-

planation given, but, on the whole, they were content to ask for little explanation; they loved and were together, that was enough.

All around the sable plumed pines waved, the cataracts thundered, the serene white mountains soared into the heaven. It seemed as lonely as though they two were the only human beings on this earth.

A sudden *jöddel* broke upon the enchantment. From behind an overhanging rock appeared a girl in a bright blue petticoat, laced boddice and white chemi-sette, and, standing with her arms akimbo, began to send out the long musical note so well known in Switzerland. As she shouted, or sang,—which ever it may be

called,—down came the cows from the steep pastures, down leaped the goats from the still higher ledges of the rocks, and all stood in a circle around waiting their turn to be milked. It was pretty to see the creatures rubbing against each other, and the more impatient nudging the milkmaid's elbow, while the snowy stream foamed into the pails, and the air was filled with the sweet breath of the kine.

Vivian and Angela went up to the milking place and watched the scene, asking a dozen questions of the robust young dairywoman, who replied to them in a villainous German *patois*. It was quite incomprehensible, and their efforts to understand made the lovers laugh and jest—

they were amused at very little now, for in the divine simplicity of love they had become like two happy children. Then Angela must have some of the warm, fragrant milk, and while she drank it the herdsman told the names of all her cows, pulling them lovingly by the horns. Then, their milking over, back went cows and goats to their pasture, the bells tinkling sweetly, and now the milkwoman and a rustic-looking man carried off the pails, while Vivian and Angela wandered away over the rocks and mossy grass, as happy as Adam and Eve when they first walked together in Paradise.

"I wonder if that was our milkmaid's lover," said Angela.

"Probably," he replied; "the world ought to be full of happy lovers to-day. Mind how you get over that rock, my darling! Let me help you."

"Oh, see there!" exclaimed Angela.
"The sunset!"

As she spoke, the sun had sunk behind the highest mountain tops, and in an instant had come that glorious transfiguration of the evening glow.

Down below the valley was deep in shadow; the mountain peaks, a minute before dazzlingly white, now turned one after another to molten gold; the mist wreaths that floated about them tinged with amber and carmine. From gold each successive peak turned crimson, then rosy; then, slowly, slowly, slowly,—

from one after another, the pink flush died away, and there succeeded an awful ghastly coldness, as the snows showed deadly white against the faintly roseate sky.

Vivian and Angela had watched breathlessly, standing hand in hand; the hearts of both were full of adoration, praise, and awe.

“There!” he said, drawing a long breath, when the last faint pulse of colour had died away, “do you know Shelley’s words—

“The smokeless altars of the mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds”?

“I think of that every day,” said Angela; “they really are the altars of the

earth, aren't they? The glory of God seems to shine on them. I can understand now so well how Moses came down from the mountain with that light on his face, and how the Transfiguration took place on a mountain, and Christ went up to a mountain to pray. I thanked God before for all the beauty, and now I have the love and joy to thank Him for too! O Vivian! what have we done that we should be so happy, so happy, how can we ever thank God enough?"

His only answer was a long caress, but his soul joined with hers in a passion of rapture and praise.

They stood alone in that solitude, and before the love which filled their hearts

even the mighty Alps became insignificant and transitory.

O Love! in thee alone does poor human nature become great and mighty, for thou only of all we see or feel art infinite and eternal! The waves of thine immeasurable, unfathomable Ocean, wash through our weak hearts, and assure them of immortality, and those who embark on thy boundless sea can sail thereon for ever and ever! Where the great mountains now stand, the ocean once rolled its waves, and, in ages to come, the tides may again rise and fall where the snowy peaks now lift their majestic heads; the world itself may

perish "like a leaf;" our whole system may melt away; but Love, greater than suns or planets, will endure through all eternity.

CHAPTER XI.

“ And on her lover’s arm she leant,
And round her waist she felt it fold,
And far across the hills they went,
In that new world which is the old.
Across the hills, and far away,
Beyond their utmost purple rim,
And deep into the dying day,
The happy princess followed him ! ”

TENNYSON.

DANTE, who wrote with such intense passion of the “dolorous abyss” of Hell, and of the steep Purgatorial Hill of Hope and Purification, has failed in his description of Paradise, and it is useless for others to

try where the mighty master has not succeeded. The truth is, our human language cannot convey joy. Weak mortals that we are, we can only stammer the language of Heaven, and Happiness has to borrow from her sister Sorrow the utterance of sighs and tears, to express that which seems above all words. I will therefore leave Vivian and Angela in that "new world which is the old," attempting no description of their feelings.

Vivian accompanied Mrs Bosanquet and Angela back to England, and the wedding took place two months afterwards. It is easy to imagine the account thereof given by the *Court Circular*, the *Queen*, and other fashionable newspapers, nor yet is it difficult to picture Angela's pure loveliness, in her

sheeny satin and filmy lace, nor Vivian's flashing eyes and look of triumphant happiness as he walked down the church-aisle, with his head thrown back, a proud smile on his lips, and his beautiful wife's hand on his arm.

He had bought a large schooner-yacht, with reserve steam-power, and fitted up with every luxury. In this yacht he had determined to take Angela for a year's voyage; partly that absence might soften to Harry the pain and awkwardness of meeting her as his wife, partly because he longed to have her all to himself for a short time; a little because he wanted time for study and for writing the second volume of his book, and a great deal more because he had always

projected a visit to the Andes and the South Seas.

Angela thought the plan a most delightful one, and a week after their marriage, Sir Vivian and Lady Vane set off on their voyage, with much of the feeling in their minds that Tennyson describes :—

“ We left behind the painted buoy
That tosses by the harbour mouth,
And madly danced our hearts with joy,
As fast we floated to the South.
How fresh was every sight and sound
On open main or sounding shore !
We knew the merry world was round,
And we might sail for evermore.”

Captain Vane had started off on a tour to Spain, two days before his brother's marriage. He spent the winter pleasantly

enough among all the new sights and sounds, and perhaps the dark eyes and graceful figures of the Spanish women may have helped a little, as well as the adventures of travel, to efface the memory of Angela. When he came home in the spring, he was so far cured that he did not even tell himself he was cured—a very hopeful symptom.

There still remained, however, in his mind a dread of reviving old associations by any visit to Crofton, and therefore another year passed before Frank saw him again. The meeting then was purely accidental.

Harry had promised Vivian to keep an eye on the St Michael's estate, and on all the improvements that were being made

there. One day he received a letter from the agent about some difficulty which Harry judged it better to answer in person. He therefore went suddenly down to St Michael's, and found Frank Willoughby there on a visit to the Dowager Lady Vane. Harry had not seen his cousin since the day on which he had gone down to Freshwater and Angela had broken off her engagement, now nearly two years ago.

At first there was a slight embarrassment in the meeting, but before the first evening was over, this had quite worn off, partly owing to the presence of the vicar of the parish, a friend of Vivian's, to whom he had lately presented the living. Mr Herbert was a good-looking, broad-shouldered man,

of about thirty, with a hearty, genial manner. He and Frank had so much to say to each other about parish details, schools, &c., that Harry felt thrown out in the cold, and, as the evening went on, a rather angry, jealous feeling took possession of his mind. Frank and Mr Herbert had a number of little jokes together, which he did not understand. Frank took such great interest in Mr Herbert's stories of Jim Bates, who had been had up for poaching, and Mary Yeo, who was going to be confirmed, and Mrs Dawson's twin babies. Finally, when Frank went to the piano to sing, Mr Herbert went there to turn over the leaves, quite as a matter of course; and then he sang a second to some of her songs, and then they drifted into more talk about church-music and school part-

singing;—altogether Harry felt aggrieved. After Mr Herbert had gone, Lady Vane said good-night, and Frank was following her example.

“Don’t go yet, Frank,” said Harry, holding her hand, “I haven’t had a word with you. I declare no one has a chance with a woman when there’s a parson in the way. Stop with me a little now, there’s a darling!”

“Indeed, I shall do no such thing,” said Frank, “I am much too sleepy,—

‘Good-night, good-night, beloved!’

Oh, I forgot; I am not to sing in the passages after twelve o’clock at night! Good-night!” and she waved her hand to him, and ran lightly up the stairs, her heart

gayer and happier than it had been for many a day.

The next morning she came into the breakfast-room with her brown curly hair brushed as smooth as its nature would allow of, a bright pink colour in her cheeks, and her blue eyes dancing and laughing with innocent glee. Harry thought, as he helped her to cold partridge, &c., that she was certainly one of the prettiest girls he had ever seen. "She always looks so clean and fresh, and wholesome, the dear," he reflected.

"You are coming out riding with me this morning, Frank," he said aloud.

"No, I am going to the school."

"School be jigged! I expect to be made much of and taken care of when I

am at home. Mother, don't you think it would be very selfish of Frank to go to the school to-day instead of coming with me?"

"Yes, my dear, I think you might leave the school for once; Mr Herbert really does work you very hard with that singing. Besides, I want you to ride over to Combe Linton for me and take a note to Lady Severne."

"Very well," said Frank, blushing a sudden unexpected rosy red to the tips of her little ears.

Lady Vane and Harry both looked at her curiously, and the girl, apparently unable to bear the inspection, made some excuse and left the room.

Harry felt a curious sensation of em-

barrassment as she did so, and scarcely knew what to say, but his mother, looking fixedly at the door by which Frank had gone out, and pressing her lips together, said—

“Yes, yes, that just confirms my suspicions.”

“What suspicions?”

“Why, you know Captain Beaufort?”

“George Beaufort? Yes, of course I do.”

“Well, he has been very attentive to Frank for a long time, your Aunt Treherne tells me, and he is at Combe Linton now and always coming over here. I cannot make out whether Frank likes him or not, but I am certain something took place the other day, when they were walk-

ing round the garden, they both seemed so embarrassed when they came in."

Harry pulled the ends of his moustache rather savagely, but made no comment, and merely saying, "I must go and look at the horses," went out of the room.

Half-an-hour afterwards he and Frank were riding together along the lanes, the girl talking, laughing, singing little snatches of song, with a merriment that had in it something feverish, her cavalier silent and lost in meditation. His mother's words had touched a strange chord in him. Why was it that the thought of Frank wooed and won by another man was so unbearable to him? It was not possible that he loved her himself? Pshaw! he had loved once, and the woman to whom he had

given his heart had thrown it aside as a worthless thing; he would not put it in the power of any girl to make him suffer such pain a second time! Besides, he was wiser now, and saw the value and delight of freedom; he was not going to be fool enough to marry at all at present. *Marry?*—what an absurdity! What reason had he to think Frank would marry him even if he asked her to do so?—she was very likely in love,—perhaps engaged,—to that ass George Beaufort.

Harry remembered with a sort of pang that she had once said Captain Beaufort was the best cricketer and the best dancer she had ever seen. “She is long chalks too good for him, too; a conceited, empty-headed puppy!” and Harry looked ad-

miringly at Frank as she rode on before him in the narrow lane, her lithe slender figure swaying to every motion of the pretty chestnut mare she was riding.

She meanwhile had gradually ceased talking to her silent companion, and wondered as she rode along whether he were thinking of Angela, from whom she had received a letter that morning.

"Of course he is," she thought, and she stifled a sigh, and began to hum

"I cares for nobody and nobody cares for I."

They were riding along one of the deep lovely Devonshire lanes, bordered by steep banks of red earth, overhung by long drooping trails of ivy, and surmounted by tall hedges which completely shut out the country, except where a gate came to

break their line. Suddenly they heard close by a discordant shriek and whistle, and a loud and unearthly bellowing, rumbling, and puffing.

"It is one of Vivian's horrible improvements, a steam plough or something," said Harry. "Steady, mare! Stand still, will you? I believe it's coming down the lane, Frank; let's get into this field." The horses, however, mad with fright, were kicking, jumping, and rearing, and it was impossible to get open the gate. "*Stop*," called out Harry at the top of his voice, to the men with the machine, which now came puffing into sight.

"Get as close up to the gate as you can, Frank; I can't make those fools hear. They don't seem to see us, and there's

barely room for it to pass—steady, Lorna Doone! Quiet, mare!”

But Lorna Doone was actually mad with terror, and, seeming to give a perpendicular leap in the air, she actually jumped the gate, her hind feet catching in the top rail, so that Frank was thrown over her head into the field. The mare recovered herself cleverly and galloped off riderless.

“Stop that infernal machine and hold my horse,” called out Harry to a countryman who ran up, and throwing the man his horse’s bridle, and jumping the gate, he lifted Frank in his arms, ejaculating, “My darling!” in a broken voice.

“I’m all right, Harry,” said the girl;

"the ground is beautifully soft here; I'm not a bit hurt, only all covered with mud and my hat smashed," and she picked herself up and laughed, though she looked a little pale.

"Are you *sure* you're not hurt?"

"Yes, quite sure; I daresay I shall be black and blue to-morrow, but that doesn't matter. Where's Lorna Doone? Oh, that man has caught her. Call out to him to bring her here, Harry, and I'll get up again, though I'm afraid I'm too dirty to go to Combe Linton."

"Do you really feel able to ride home?" said Harry. "I think I had better go and get the pony carriage for you, or I can send one of these fellows and stop with you."

"I'm all right," said Frank, "I tell you the ground here is as soft as butter. Do you think I'm going to be beat by a horse? Why, Lorna Doone would think she was going to be mistress if I didn't ride her home. Give me a hand, Harry," and in another moment she was in the saddle.

"Bring my horse here," called out Harry to the man who was holding his animal's bridle; "I don't think we'll let them see that thing, Frank. We'll take them home across the fields." As Harry spoke, he saw something glittering on the ground, and stooped to pick it up. It was a locket lying open, and in that locket, to his utter astonishment, he saw his own photograph, and a little scrap

of paper in his own handwriting. He picked it up and examined it;—it was a locket he had given Frank years ago. She did not see it or him; she was busy wiping the mud from her habit and soothing her frightened horse, and, meanwhile, Harry stood motionless with the locket in his hand, dizzy and almost stunned by the rush of feelings in his mind. What was the meaning of it? Frank must have dropped this locket. She must be in the habit of constantly wearing it, as she had had it on even when riding, and not only of wearing it but of wearing it secretly, for he had never seen it on her, *and* the locket had been given to her by himself, and contained his likeness and words in his writing.

What could he think? Let him be never so little of a coxcomb, a man must guess that such a sign presupposes, at the very least, strong interest in his favour, and Harry's heart beat rapidly, and the blood flamed into his cheeks, as, still holding the locket tightly clasped in his hand, he mounted his horse and rode slowly down the field at his cousin's side.

Some strange and mighty feeling had risen in his mind, and was shaking his whole nature; a thousand scarcely noticed trifles, hitherto light as air, now rushed into his remembrance with overwhelming force,—looks, tones, faint indications, but all proving to him now that she loved him,—this lovely, brave, innocent girl. Again he remembered old Lady Tre-

herne's words, "She would die rather than own it, but she is madly in love with you," and now his own heart assured him of their truth.

"Yes, she loves me; and by heaven I love her with my whole soul, and I will"——

He was suddenly interrupted by an exclamation of distress from Frank.

"What is it, my darling?" he said, anxiously. "Do you feel any hurt?"

"No," said Frank, colouring at the strange warmth of his words and tones, and the strange glance with which his eyes met hers. "No, I have lost—never mind, I will send and look for it."

"Look for what?"

"Never mind,—nothing."

"Oh, do tell me," said Harry. "Is it a locket?"

"Yes," said Frank, eagerly, and blushing scarlet; "have you found it? Oh, do give it to me, Harry. I suppose—I—forgot—to take it off. Please give it to me now. *Please.*"

"Only on one condition then, Frank, dear Frank," said Harry, drawing near and speaking in low earnest tones. "Give me something else instead; give me yourself. Frank,—I love you with all my heart; say *yes*, won't you?"

There was no answer.

"Frank," said Harry, urgently, pressing up close to her side. But Lorna Doone's temper and nerves had been quite sufficiently tried, and she shied violently away.

Both Harry and Frank laughed.

"There you see," said Harry, "don't oblige me to go on asking you, or Lorna will get wild again; Frank, say yes."

Frank looked at him with a shade of suspicion and defiance.

"Why do you say this now? You don't really mean it."

"Don't I, then? that's all. On my sacred word of honour, Frank, I love you more than my life. Frank, my darling, say you will love me."

"I always have," said Frank, in a low voice, "but you haven't; you"—

"I swear to you I never loved anybody as I do you," said Harry, energetically. "Frank, will you be my wife?"

I have heard it said that it is impossible

to kiss on horseback. Lorna Doone was very frisky that day, and indeed she had a good deal to try her nerves, but,—“where there’s a will, there’s a way.”

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE.

" Rich, but the loneliest in a lonely land.

.
The mountains wooded to the peak, the lawns
And winding glades high up, like ways to Heaven,
The slender coco's drooping crown of plumes,
The lightning flash of insect and of bird,
The lustre of the long convolvuluses
That coiled around the stately stems, and ran
Ev'n to the limit of the land, the glows
And glories of the broad belt of the world."

TENNYSON.

AN island in the South Seas; one of those

"Summer isles of Eden, lying in dark-purple spheres
of sea."

A deep gorge through which a mountain-

stream comes foaming down to the ocean; the sides of the gorge all overgrown with the luxuriant tropical vegetation—feathery cocoa-palms, banyans, bread-fruit trees. Lianes and creepers, covered with gorgeous flowers, crimson, golden and blue, twine round the trees, and hang in trailing banners from the crags. Gaily coloured parrots fly and scream amongst the foliage; insects, like living flowers, dart about, and round the cliffs wheel and shriek myriads of rose-coloured and white ocean birds.

Up above rise wooded mountains, and in front stretches the deep-blue Pacific, perfectly calm save where on the shore the long breakers dash with an incessant roar. These rollers come up for a thou-

sand miles straight against the trade-wind, and break on the coral beach, on this, the leeward side of the island, with an eternal thunder.

This scene was the background to a beautiful group—a man, handsome and vigorous, and a beautiful young woman, holding in her arms her first-born child. The father and mother were Vivian and Angela, and their child had been born some eight months before at Lima.

Nearly two years had passed since they had left England, and they had seen strange things since that day. They had been to California, and seen the grand Yosemite Valley, they had travelled in Mexico, spite of robbers and revolutions ; they had climbed

the Andes, and visited the silver mines of Potosi, and now they were dreaming away life in a sunny isle of the peaceful ocean.

The yacht was round on the other side of the island, within the coral reef, but this gorge was one of Angela's favourite spots, and they often spent their days there, returning to the yacht at night, or sometimes sleeping in a tent on shore.

What a lazy, delicious life it was! Sometimes they paddled about inside the reef, and saw down below the crystal clear water, those nereid gardens of the deep, coral groves of endless shapes and colours, pink, salmon, green, purple and white; rainbow-coloured fishes dart-

ing about amongst them. Sometimes they stayed in the yacht, and Vivian wrote his book or studied, while Angela helped him, or nursed and played with her baby. Sometimes they spent hours under the palm-trees, as they were doing to-day, while they talked, or read, or painted; and in the evening they sat on the deck of the yacht, and watched the phosphorescent sea below, and above, in the purple heaven, the large constellations of the tropic night, while Angela sang to the sailors, all of whom idolised her sweet face and gentle voice.

The sun was sinking below the waves with a glory of crimson and gold, as Vivian and Angela listened to the breakers that evening, and enjoyed the strange spicy

scents and the soft balm of the breeze. Vivian had a book of Greek poetry in his hand, but he was not reading, only gazing dreamily out to sea, with rather a soft sad expression in his black eyes. He was browned by the sun, and looked more than ever full of life and fire, as though the tropics were the fit home for his ardent nature.

Angela was sitting on the grass beside him, playing with her baby, a beautiful dark-eyed boy. She was holding a trailer of crimson flowers above the little fellow's head as he lay on his back in her lap, and mother and child laughed gleefully when the chubby little fists succeeded in catching the waving flower. Angela's complexion had regained its soft

brilliant bloom; her dark eyes were liquid with love, and a divine smile of happiness hovered close to her lips.

"What are you thinking about, Vivian?" she said presently.

Vivian did not answer, but drew her and the child together into his arms, and clasped them against his breast.

"There now, I am holding all my world," he said; then he began to pull the silky rings of the baby's dark chestnut-coloured hair through his fingers.

"Isn't it long?" said Angela. "Fancy a baby of that age with all that hair! and look at his lovely black eyes, how brilliant they are! They are exactly like yours, Vivian."

"Thank you," said Vivian, laughing,

and giving a butterfly kiss to each of his son's eyes, the dimpled hands meanwhile seizing his moustache in their grasp. "Let go, you Turk," he exclaimed, and then ensued a game of romps, and then the black eyes grew heavy, and gradually closed, and with his head resting on his mother's breast, cradled in her soft arms, Master Baby dropped asleep.

"How happy we have been, how happy we are!" said Angela, looking up in her husband's face.

"Happy! yes," he said, with a little sigh; "but now we mustn't eat the lotus any longer, my Angela."

"I knew that was what you were thinking about. I have thought several times lately that perhaps we were growing selfish

in our happiness," said Angela, "and that it was time to go back to the world again. But oh! shan't you hate to leave these dear islands, Vivian?"

"Hate it? I have been happier than any dream of paradise. I wish we could stay here for ever. However, I suppose we must make up our minds to go back to civilisation again—to newspapers, and telegrams, and dinner-parties, and all the other inventions for making life a nuisance. How long is it since we left England?"

"Twenty months."

"Twenty months! nearly two years! so it is! Angela, wouldn't you like to go north-west now to the Indian Archipelago, and see the Spice Islands,

and Ceylon, and a little of India, and so home by the Red Sea and the Suez Canal?"

"Oh, how delightful!" said Angela, "but"—and she looked up at him and smiled.

"Yes, you are right," said Vivian, also smiling; "we mustn't linger so long on our way. However, one comfort is that we are at the other side of the world, and however fast we go home, it will be some time before we get there, so we have not done with the dear old "Albatross" yet awhile. Well, happy as we have been in her, there will be happiness too in going back to our work in life."

"You have not been so very idle after

all," said Angela; "you have finished your book."

"Yes, and you have been my busy little secretary, and have studied till you're as blue as a gentian flower," said Vivian, laughing and kissing her; "but all our work will not be so easy, darling; we shall have to expect some troubles and disappointments, though we can fight and bear them together."

Angela looked up with a smile full of confidence. "I am not afraid," she said. Then there was silence.

After a few minutes Angela said, "I shall be so glad to see Uncle George again, and the boys, and Marguérite, and above all Harry and Frank. O Vivian! isn't it nice that they should marry one

another? It is like the end of a fairy tale."

"Dear old Harry!" replied Vivian, "it will be good to see his face again. We will go to Compton as soon as ever we arrive in England. Don't you begin to think you will be happy there, Angela?"

"Happy!" repeated Angela, "I should be happy if I lived on dry bread in a garret and took in washing, if you were with me!"

"Well, I hope you won't have to do that, but I'm of your opinion. Anywhere,—in any life,—if we are together, we shall be happy."

And happy they are and will be, though

into their life as into that of all human beings sorrows and trials enter ; but their joy the world did not give them and the world cannot take away. With the light of that joy shining on its waters, the mingled stream of their two lives flows on towards the mighty Ocean.

THE END.

